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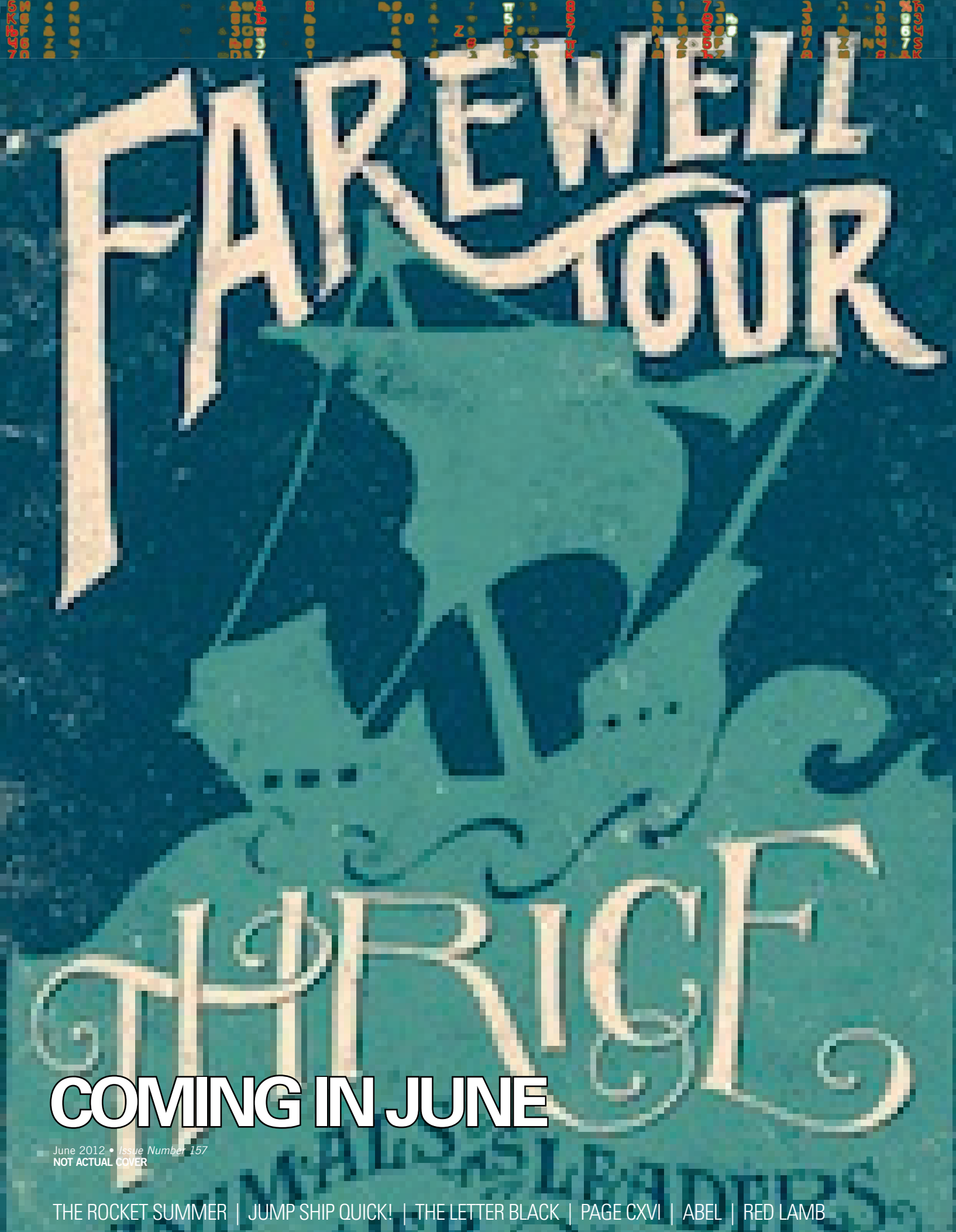

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June 2012 • *Issue Number 157*
NOT ACTUAL COVER

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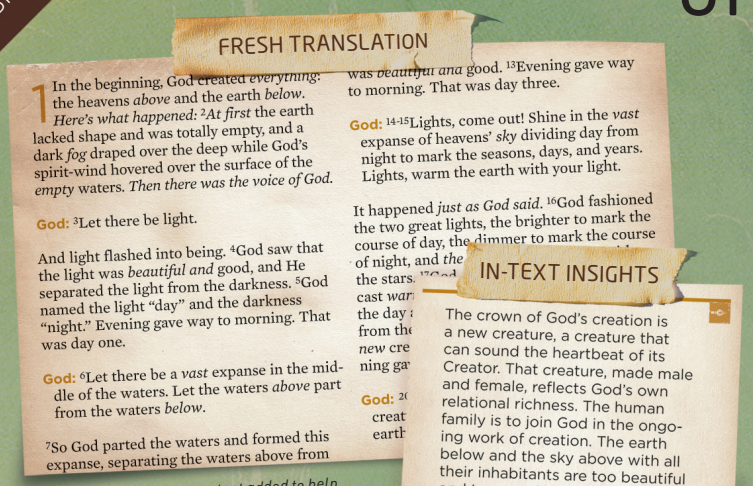
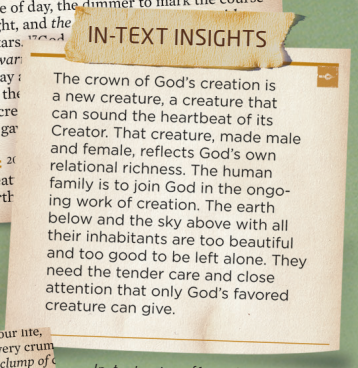
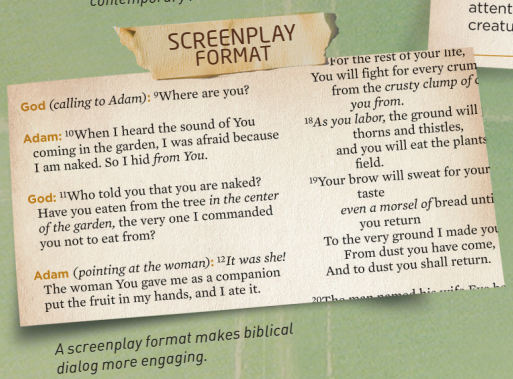

FRESH TRANSLATION
1 In the beginning, God created *everything*: the heavens *above* and the earth *below*. *Here's what happened:* 2*At first* the earth lacked shape and was totally empty, and a dark *fog* draped over the deep while God's spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the *empty* waters. *Then there was the voice of God.*
God: 3Let there be light.
And light flashed into being. 4God saw that the light was *beautiful and* good, and He separated the light from the darkness. 5God named the light "day" and the darkness "night." Evening gave way to morning. That was day one.
God: 6Let there be a *vast* expanse in the middle of the waters. Let the waters *above* part from the waters *below*.
7So God parted the waters and formed this expanse, separating the waters above from
was *beautiful and* good. 13Evening gave way to morning. That was day three.
God: 14-15Lights, come out! Shine in the *vast* expanse of heavens' *sky* dividing day from night to mark the seasons, days, and years. Lights, warm the earth with your light.
It happened *just as God said.* 16God fashioned the two great lights, the brighter to mark the course of day, the dimmer to mark the course
Italic type indicates content added to help contemporary readers bridge the history gap.


IN-TEXT INSIGHTS
The crown of God's creation is a new creature, a creature that can sound the heartbeat of its Creator. That creature, made male and female, reflects God's own relational richness. The human family is to join God in the ongoing work of creation. The earth below and the sky above with all their inhabitants are too beautiful and too good to be left alone. They need the tender care and close attention that only God's favored creature can give.
In-text notes offer cultural, theological, or devotional insights.


SCREENPLAY FORMAT
God (calling to Adam): 9Where are you?
Adam: 10When I heard the sound of You coming in the garden, I was afraid because I am naked. So I hid *from You.*
God: 11Who told you that you are naked? Have you eaten from the tree *in the center of the garden,* the very one I commanded you not to eat from?
Adam (pointing at the woman): 12*It was she!* The woman You gave me as a companion put the fruit in my hands, and I ate it.
For the rest of your life,
You will fight for every crum
from the *crusty clump of*
you from.
18*As you labor,* the ground will
thorns and thistles,
and you will eat the plants
field.
19Your brow will sweat for your
taste
even a morsel of bread unti
you return
To the very ground I made you
From dust you have come,
And to dust you shall return.
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- Pete Wilson, Pastor/Author

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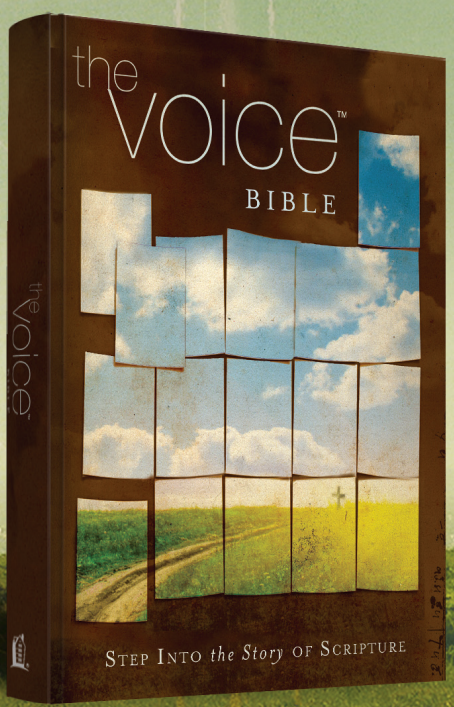
- Patricia Janes, The Voice Bible Reader



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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

I NEED A BREAK

I'm praying about taking a sabbatical from HM Magazine. Not sure if it's possible, but if I can find some help to keep it cranking while I'm gone a couple, three months, I should come back refreshed and restored. Right now it's just a thought and something I'm praying about. Life is insane right now. If the biblical tribulation or massive upheaval were to happen, I guess all this stress would get put in perspective. If this has been a test to prepare for something worse, I'm afraid I might not make it under harsher, "game-time" conditions. I'm feeling weak, but I have a relationship with God, which invigorates me and fills me with hope. My prayer is that the pages of this magazine can offer some of that God-given hope, encouragement and edifying energy to you – the reader.

On a related note, check out the awesome interviews with For Today, Project 86, The Whosoevers, Easop, The Choir and a whole lot more. I think you might find it inspiring and encouraging like I did. I love being able to pass on "food" like this to fellow "hungry" music fans that yearn for good music and something more.

I'm really glad to announce that the book Rock Stars on God, V.2 is actually out and in my hands. It's a thrill to hold what you've been working on for years in your hands. Get it direct from us at the online store (at hmmag.com). If you prefer shopping at amazon.com, it'll be available there soon (I'm told the process for getting into that system might take my publishing company 6-8 weeks, so if you want it now, order from us).

If you end up at the Creation, Cornerstone or Sonshine festivals, be sure to take advantage of our HM Magazine subscription specials. We'll have some doozies, so keep your eyes open.

Please keep sharing the link to our free and packed 12/11 issue, because (the idea is) more people will come and start reading HM: tinyurl.com/HM151

SPINNING AT HM NOW

MORIAH PETERS	*I Choose Jesus*	I wasn't expecting the quirky greatness on this album.
TALLHART	*LBloodlines*	Heavy lyrics and lilting, energetic music.
DEMON HUNTER	*True Defiance*	I love this band. This album does not disappoint.
THE CHOIR	*The Loudest Sound...*	It's great to have this band back in fine form.
THE GOLDEN SOUNDS	*The Fireflies Were Right*	Oh my gosh! Amazing. You must hear this album!!!
P.O.D.	*Murdered Love*	Here's a great comeback album. Way to go, guys!
FOR TODAY	*Immortal*	Shocked at the melodies, but I love it nonetheless.
WHITE COLLAR SS	*The Witch Hunt*	Wow! A real album of good industrial tunes.

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Letters to the Edit

ROCK STARS ON GOD, V.2

Enjoying the two Rock Stars on God books. Loved hearing the recording of Chris Cornell interview. Do you have others that you could post too. Wow, that guy was sure "confident" in his abilities as a musician.
–David Aaron, via email

I received the books last night. I'm going to start reading them asap. I enjoy the magazine and being kept up to date on what's current in music. As a huge lover of music, I envy the opportunities you've had to meet with so many artists. What an interesting life God has blessed you with. Thanks for sharing a part of your experiences with us fans.
–Tracy Scott, via email

Got my copy in the mail today. I love it! It's laid out really well and it's such a great way to "step in" to the minds of all these iconic artists. Thanks for all the great work you've put into this!
–Clayton Powell, via kickstarter

Got my copy in the mail today – can't wait to read! Already shared it with a few of our college students.
–Drew McNeill, via kickstarter

Interesting groups... I have such a phobia of Slayer. I can't look at any of their album covers or even the logo. I turn my head so fast, I feel like hell will open up under my feet if I take it in ... And you interviewed those guys? Brave soul? Scott Stapp? Hmmm ... I don't know how to react to that one. Kinda numb. Chris Cornell, that's a good interview. He's a real interesting dude.
–Anthony Castellitto, via website

Ed – Thanks for the feedback. I'm real happy with how RSOG, v.2 came out. 25+ interviews that I consider some of the best we've published in HM.

FLYING MORSES

Thanks for the review of Flying Colors in the latest issue. I'm a big Neal Morse fan, but wasn't aware of this project. I picked it up and it's excellent – kind of a King's X vibe going on in some songs ... great stuff!
–Brian Lang, via email

Ed – Isn't that album good? I'm biased (having a daughter named Kaela), but I like the song "Kayla" a lot.

DESERT HIGHNESS

Just finished the book this morning. You wrote on the inside cover, "Hope you enjoy this time travel trip," and I definitely did. It really was a trip back in time for me, because I haven't been back to Edwards in almost 15 years. When you wrote about running up D-hill, I was right there with you. That thing's a beast! I played basketball and had forgotten about most of the surrounding towns. It was fun to travel with you through the Trona mines, Tehachapi windmills, and mountain towns of Mammoth and Big Bear. First, I didn't expect it was going to be so personal. Using your own name and wife's name as well as other personal details from your life really blur the line between truth and fiction. That's some real vulnerability there. It added some authenticity knowing that a lot of what was in there was rooted in real life. Thanks for being willing to expose yourself like that. Second, I commend you for trying to put some Christian messaging throughout the text. Sometimes it worked for me, other times I found it distracting. I can totally identify how tough it is to put in some nuggets of truth without sounding like a cheese-ball or preacher man. But I'm not going to think for a second that my opinion really matters. I hope and pray you can reach someone with what is in there. I was half expecting to get into a detailed account of your transformation from seventeen year old, pot-smoking, football player to follower of Jesus. Third, I could totally see this as a series. Sending DVP back in time to "fix" history. Especially with all your connections to music. Is there a sequel on the horizon? Finally, I was hoping for some more theology on time travel. You covered it a couple times early on, but I really wanted to have some more of that. What if Jesus came from the future (not saying He did, but man that would be fun to explore)...?
–Nate Worrell, *via email*

Ed – Oh, man! Why'd you have to say the word "Mammoth!?" Now you ruined my day! Ha ha. It's funny you brought up "Christian messaging" and how you found it distracting (yet you wanted more theology on time travel?). I did my best to take out Christian messaging and resisted the tendency to put it in there. I actually removed a portion about someone going to hell. I tried to remain faithful to the story and not forcefully add some evangelical purpose to it. I wrote as unto the Lord, not running away from His will, but the story wasn't about people accepting Jesus as a result of reading the book, but it was about what it was about. It's funny, but because it was about me, some of that spirituality that made it in couldn't be helped. It just naturally showed up, because that's who I am.

ONLINE EDITIONS ROCK

I think issue #'s 153 and 155 have been the best. Really cool covers. I would say that, since going online, the magazine has looked really good. Great pics and it seems like a lot more color.
–Kevin Tucker, via email

Ed – Thanks for the feedback. The new online system and the magazine production/deadline process seems to be getting easier for me. Now if I can just get back on schedule!

HM

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SCRIPTURE "He who gives attention to the Word shall find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." (Proverbs 16:20)

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HM

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AS I LAY DYING

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HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

BLOODGOOD SONS MAKE MUSIC

FROM DANCING TO ROCK

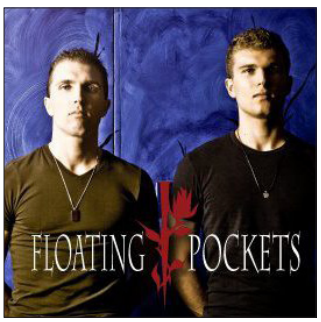
Paul Bloodgood and his brother Adam, who are both professional ballet dancers, enjoyed some time together in Austin, TX (where Paul is a member of the Austin Ballet) and ended up making an album of mostly middle-of-the-road rock, not too unlike a lot of modern worship. Paul handled all the vocals and drums, while Adam played the guitar. The bass was added in another session by dad himself (Michael Bloodgood). "Although we had technically never worked on a music project together," explains the elder Paul, "we had a built-in, brotherly shorthand and natural rhythmic tastes that complimented each other very well."

For more info, go to facebook.com/floatingpockets

WOLVES AT THE GATE TO DEBUT

ANDREAS MAGNUSSEN-PRODUCED ALBUM

Wolves at the Gate will release its full-length debut, *Captors*, July 3rd on Solid State Records. The follow-up to their touted 2011 EP *We Are the Ones*, *Captors* finds the band living up to and by all accounts surpassing the huge potential recognized by critics and fans alike. "We were really excited to branch out further into our creativity and diversify our songwriting," explains guitarist/vocalist Steve Cobucci. "On *Captors*, listeners will definitely hear a more mature side of WATG with a clearer vision of how we approach our songwriting." Produced by Andreas Magnusson (Oh, Sleeper, Haste the Day, etc), *Captors* is a blisteringly heavy full-length debut with the potential to appeal to every variety of rocker – from fans of metalcore to traditional metal to mainstream hard rock.



Love Song to be inducted to GMA Hall of Fame

In the early 70's, during the beginnings of what became known as the "Jesus Movement," a group of young, longhaired, "hippie" musicians called Love Song began to use their music to express their newfound faith in Jesus Christ. A mixture of rock and pop, Love Song's music was entirely new and unique for the Christian music world. Think Eagles and early Daniel Amos. The induction ceremonies will take place on August 14th at Trinity Music City Auditorium in Hendersonville. Aretha Franklin, Ricky Skaggs, Dallas Holm, The Hoppers and Rex Humbard are the other inductees this year.

News bullets

Good Fight Music has signed a label parntership deal with the EntOne Group. This should bring wider distribution for **The Chariot**.

Matisyahu is doing a nationwide tour this summer with The Dirty Heads.

To Speak of Wolves has posted a new video for the song "Je Suis Fini."

P.O.D. has pushed its *Murdered Love* album release date back to July 10th, but have just released a video for the song "Lost in Forever."

Tenth Avenue North is releasing its third album in August.

Memphis May Fire are releasing its new album, *Challenger*, June 26th on Rise Records.

Everclear (interviewed in HM #) has a new album, *Invisible Stars*, coming out on June 26th.

Owl City released its *Shooting Star* EP, featuring his new single "Shooting Star" along with "Gold," "Take It All Away," and "Dementia" which features blink-182's Mark Hoppus on guest vocals. All four tracks are from Owl City's upcoming full-length studio album due out Summer 2012 on Universal Republic.

Frank Hart (Atomic Opera) is putting together a worship album of songs from his church, CrossPoint and he's using kickstarter to fund it.

Korn made some waves in early May when **Brian "Head" Welch** (Love & Death) joined his old band on stage at the Carolina Rebellion Festival.

Flame has made his acting debut on GMC in *From This Day Forward*.

War of Ages has released the first video ("Silent Nigh") from its *Return to Life* album. It was directed by DJ Cosgrove of RSM Collective.

Lust Control had a successful kickstarter for its new album, which it plans on recording in San Antonio in mid-July. Look for a vinyl release.

Bluetree

KINGDOM ALBUM MARKS BRAND NEW START FOR BAND
BY CHRISTA BANISTER

For most bands, it's a mark that you've officially "made it" when you've got a hit radio single, plenty of positive press and a jam-packed tour schedule where nomadic living is essentially the new normal.

But for the Belfast, Ireland-based band Bluetree, best known for their stirring reminder that God's light still shines, even in the darkest of places – like Thailand's Red Light district where "God of This City" was born – living the so-called "dream" was nothing but a giant step backward. If anything, they felt unsettled, uninspired and eventually, more sure of their true place in the Kingdom than ever before.

"When we were traveling so much, I didn't write one song, I just couldn't," says Bluetree's singer, primary songwriter and founding member Aaron Boyd. "When you're always busy, you're not being fed, and it can't help but catch up with you. When you're called to be a worship leader, there's no greater call than leading your own church in worship. That's what I've learned from the journey I've walked through."

What also served as a wake-up call were conversations Aaron had with a few of his industry peers on the road, some of whom hadn't gone to – or connected with – their home church in six months, or in some cases, even a year.

"That really shook me up – doing what we're doing isn't supposed to be about traveling, traveling, traveling," Aaron shares. "At the end of the day, you can't be chasing this idea of running around the world and being Christian superstars. It's about staying grounded and investing in meaningful relationships back home and getting the priorities in order – love God, love family and serve your church. If God wants you to go sing and minister to people, it'll be an overflow of what's genuinely happening in your own life."

So instead of continuing on a path that no longer meshed well with the group's philosophy of ministry, Bluetree carved an entirely new path altogether. They cleared their schedule, changed their relationship with their booking agents and management and moved forward independently. And if God wanted Bluetree to do anything outside of their home church in Belfast, well, Aaron believed He was more than capable of opening those doors.

Throwing himself completely into his growing congregation, Exchange Church Belfast, new songs naturally began emerging. Inspired by the sermon series the body was studying together, Bluetree was reborn, not just as a band, but a community of believers worshipping, learning and doing life together.

"Now whenever anyone's booking Bluetree, you're booking the heart of our church," Aaron says. "What's going on here in Belfast, you get to be part of that."

An outgrowth of what they've been working on together at Exchange, Aaron, along with Ryan Griffith, a fellow worship leader at Exchange, started collaborating on songs that's become part of Bluetree's new album, *Kingdom*. A conversation about understanding who we are as children in the Kingdom of God, the songs themselves dovetail with what's been preached in Sunday morning and evening services at Exchange.

"What's been great about writing with Ryan is we go to the same church. We're listening to the same teaching. We're in the same meetings," Aaron says. "Our relationship isn't forced because we're regularly leading worship there, and that's a beautiful thing."

Also helping set the tone for the project is the album's evocative cover artwork. Underscoring the idea of what it means for believers to be part of the new covenant, an existence that's defined by love, power and God's unmerited favor, the visuals are inspired by the story of David and Goliath.

"When David put on Saul's armor, he ended up taking it off and saying it hadn't proved itself to him," Aaron explains. "David knew what had proved itself to him in his life – the power of God. David had seen the power of God at work during his whole life. He knew he was in covenant with God. So to try and put on another's armor would be him trying to operate in his own strength."

For more info: exchangechurchbelfast.com

Slospeak Records is releasing a free summer sampler, featuring songs from **SONS**, **Pioneer**, **Blood and Water**, **Owen Pye** and **Golden Youth**.

Paul Van Dyk's **Evolution** album features guests like **Adam Young** (Owl City) and **Plumb**.

Gonzo Media Group has just released *Caped Crusader, Rick Wakeman In The 1970s* by veteran author, broadcaster and journalist, Dan Wooding, with a foreword by Elton John. We haven't seen a copy yet, so we don't know if it will cover the legendary keyboardist's conversion to Christianity, which might've happend (?) in the '80s.

August Burns Red just announced a string of festival and headlining dates throughout the summer that will see ABR hit 13 countries in 4 weeks before returning stateside to support the legendary Refused at Philadelphia's Riot Fest, followed by a return to South America. "I can say with all sincerity that ABR has never looked forward to a European tour as much as we are looking forward to our upcoming run in June/July," says guitarist JB Brubaker. "We haven't done the 'festival circuit' since 2009 and that was one of our favorite overseas tours to date. I'm pumped to have the opportunity to play alongside some legendary bands and in front of some massive crowds!"

Multi-instrumentalist, singer, songwriter and producer Bryce Avary, known as **The Rocket Summer**, has just announced additional dates for the U.S. headlining tour in support of the new full-length album *Life Will Write the Words*, out Tuesday, June 5 on Avary's own Aviate Records.

Serianna released a music video for its cover of the Eminem classic, "Lose Yourself."

Red Lamb is a new project featuring **Dan Spitz** (ex-Anthrax) and **Dave Mustaine** (Megadeth). Their song, "Puzzle Box," highlights the Autism Speaks non-profit organization.

LIVE REPORT

Purple Door
March 10-17

REVIEW & PHOTOS BY KIM FLANDERS

(Lebanon, PA) Announced late last year, summer festival attendees heard some striking news. Purple Door, the premier music festival in Pennsylvania normally held outside during the dog days of summer in August, was moved to April. In addition to the date change, the fest was to come with a reduced price, reduced number of stages, and reduced schedule.

On April 21st, bands from folk to death metal pounced upon the Lebanon Valley Expo and Fairgrounds for this reinvented one-day experiment. One additional change proved to be useful during a month with a spring rain-shower tendency. With the exception of the skate park, the entire festival was indoors. The wind-strewn rain arrived in late afternoon pounding on the roof and sides of the large metal buildings. Two stages, a food area and vendor area were all interconnected, keeping everyone dry and eliminating the mud common in previous years.

The LBC Insider stage, sponsored by local Lancaster Bible College, was significantly smaller than the main stage, and displayed the funk/hip hop sounds of **B. Reith**, and the indie/rock/alternative sounds of **Ocean is Theory**, **Mike Mains and the Branches**, and closer **House of Heroes**, among others. Locals **The Beggar Folk**, reminiscent of what used to be at the Gallery Stage of years past, took the stage early afternoon while introducing banjo and violin to a mostly guitar and drum driven line-up, slowing things down a bit for a smaller crowd.

In general, harder bands were slated for the main stage, where southern groups **As Hell Retreats** followed by **Gideon** opened the day. A last minute change placed Pennsylvania based unsigned metalcore **My Heart to Fear** in place of **In the Midst of Lions**.

(Insert opinion moment: My Heart to Fear should be signed.)

The metalcore continued when **Sleeping Giant** tore up the stage. Next, hard rockers **Project 86** introduced two new songs at the beginning of their afternoon headliner time slot. Front man Andrew Schwab corralled the still-growing crowd to sing along as if the new tunes were fan favorites.

A bit calmer than earlier on the main stage,

Abandon Kansas kicked off the evening program. The only speaker this year, vocalist of **For Today** Mattie Montgomery brought a message of hope to a large crowd who seemed glued to his words. The stage sprung up again with **The Disciples**, a Teen Challenge rap group. Mattie Montgomery came out with the rest of For Today to bring back metal to the stage and moshing in the audience. Purple Door favorites **Family Force 5** brought in the crunk for those who remained until the end of the event.

Though smaller crowds than perhaps hoped for, the new Purple Door experiment seems to have passed the test.

Photos (clockwise from top):
Sleeping Giant, Project 86, My Heart To Fear, For Today

Andrew Schwab of Project 86
(Photo: Michael Todaro)

Trevor Pool of My Heart to Fear
(Photo: Michael Todaro)

Blake Hardman of Gideon
(Photo: Michael Todaro)

Album: *Street Gospel* EP
Label: LOD Music
Release Date: April 24, 2012
Members: Easop
RIYL: 2pac, DMX

easopmusic.com

EASOP

Street Gospel has steadily become a wider sub-genre of hip-hop with the help of artists like Easop. A San Francisco native, Easop began his music career back 1997 and released his first album, *The Time Has Come*, in 2000. He was one of the first artists to receive an award at the annual Holy Hip-Hop Music Awards held every year in Atlanta. Professional baseballer Ryan Freel, who played for the Chicago Cubs during the 2009 season, chose Easop's "Out Tha Box" as his at-bat theme song. His music pumps a powerful faith-based message complemented by a catchy West Coast hip-hop groove.

Easop grew into his beat organically from his surroundings and a deep love for music. "I was rapping at the age of 17. I've always been a fan of hip-hop and rap and music in general. I was raised in the inner-city. I had friends who you'd see one day and hear that they were murdered the next day. I grew up around gangs and drugs, but I had an upbringing in the church as well, so that kind of balanced me out. As I got older, I started wanting to do my own thing. That's when I dabbled in selling drugs. Eventually I turned my life around," he explains. "When I started going back to church I heard these rappers and I thought it was kind of cool, when you can mix your faith and hip-hop. So I took it and ran with it."

"It's definitely harder when you come with the over and undertones of the Christian message, because that's not what's being fed to us on the radio and the media in general, Easop confirms about his music's message. "I've gotten away from calling myself a Christian artist. I'm an artist that happens to be a Christian. I have faith in Jesus. I'm a believer. I've learned that people automatically categorize or try to put you in a box when you pigeonhole yourself like that. I just tell people I'm a rapper. My content just happens to be different. What we do is just an underground form of music. I live with the reality that I may never sell a million records. The way the industry is set up, it's not made for somebody like me doing the kind of music that I'm doing to succeed, per se. You have to have a more grassroots approach. You gotta make good music. It can be polka music. If it's good, people are gonna like it. I just want to make good records and good songs. That will speak for itself. I still listen to a lot of secular artists. To me it doesn't necessarily mean that I have to agree with what they're saying or live the life that they're living or telling about."

"You've Been Waiting" and "How I Do It," are the first two new songs that he's released in quite some time. "What I'm trying to do is generate some buzz with these singles, which is really an industry-standard (now)," Easop says in regard to his freshly released tracks from *Street Gospel*, his forthcoming album. "Ten years ago the music landscape wasn't what it is now in terms of the brick-and-mortar stores. Everything's gone digital. Even though the labels still pretty much control (all that), it's more geared toward the independent artist for them to take his or her artistic career in the direction they want. I'm open for more radio interviews, magazine interviews and just a groundswell of support," he says.

Easop frequently visits juvenile hall and institutions and believes that music is just an extension of the ministry God has given him to lead. "It isn't about the big hit. It's about winning the people by writing good music." And that, my friends, is street gospel.

BY CHARLIE STEFFENS

Album: TBD
Label: Facedown
Release Date: August 14, 2012
Members: Kramer Lowe, vocals; Kyle Phillips, guitar/vocals; Andrew Higginbotham, guitar; Justin Allman, bass; Mark Hudson, drums/vocals
RIYL: Blessthefall, Between the Buried and Me
facebook.com/onwardtoolympas

ONWARD TO OLYMPAS

Nick Cotrufo caught up with Kramer Lowe of Onward to Olympas to discuss the upcoming album, etc.

Nick: How has recording been?
Kramer: Well, for the most part it's been good. The drums are done and such and I personally think this is gonna be the best album we've put out. Things were going really good, but we had some software issues and had to drop the tour we were recently on, which wasn't great. We're back in the studio and doing our best to finish this album and I'm just really excited to see what people think. It's definitely the heaviest thing that we've put out.

Nick: What is the new album about?
Kramer: I've never been too big on writing concepts, so it's pretty much what we've been going through spiritually and personally. A lot of the album is about me not living the life I should be. I went through a lot of things personally, like random member changes and almost breaking up. I didn't feel like I was being the person I should have been and not going after God and essentially being a hypocrite. The first album was about overcoming the past and the second one was about spiritual warfare. I went through big things, hit the bottom and I'm putting my trust in God and I'm trying to write more things that people can relate to.

Nick: Are you guys going to stay with Facedown?
Kramer: We love everyone at Facedown. I know that some bands have gotten offers to bigger labels, but we really like them. It's all kind of up in the air. I mean, if something big came later on for us, I'm sure Facedown would be happy for us to be picked up, but I wouldn't mind re-signing to Facedown. It's rare that you get the opportunity to go and have real conversations with the owner of the label that you're on and it's great to be signed to a place where you can have conversations with everyone there. It's a great label and everyone there has treated us well.

Nick: Any plans for a new tour?
Kramer: We're doing a few summer festivals this year, like Cornerstone and Sonshine. We're planning another tour, but we can't talk too much about that. The album drops in August and we're gonna do like a two-week CD release tour up and down the East Coast.

Nick: What do you guys hope to achieve by the end of the year?
Kramer: Well, we're just hoping with our new album that it surprises a lot of people and that they enjoy it. It's sad that the generic answer is to get on bigger tours and sell tons of albums, but I'm just happy to do what I do and talk to the kids. God will provide for us. We're not really expecting anything, but if we go onto bigger things that'd be great. We'll be happy for whatever ways that God may bless us.

BY NICK COTRUFO

Ryan Ries and his dad, Raul

"WE DO EVERYTHING. WE DON'T HAVE A FORMAT. WE'RE JUST LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT." —RYAN RIES, THE WHOSOEVERS

A few hundred people have already huddled up to the church stage as a scruffy, longhaired dude in his mid-thirties takes the microphone and delivers the good news. For several in the crowd with despairing looks on their faces, this news is what they've been dying to hear. "Jesus didn't come to make bad men good," the man said boldly. "He came to make dead men live. That was his whole purpose. He wants you to bring all your baggage."

The messenger is Ryan Ries. The event is The Whosoevers' "Threat to Organized Religion...I AM" conference at Calvary Chapel Golden Springs in Diamond Bar, California on April 20th and 21st. The second conference of this magnitude since The Whosoever's inception in 2008, the non-profit movement has spread worldwide. All of its events are free and all are welcome. This year's event hosted live performances and forums from influential artists and athletes, from the freestyle motocross, skate, and surf worlds. Of the many talents who were at the conference, professional surfer Bethany Hamilton, who survived a near-fatal shark attack while surfing in her native Kauai waters, gave a moving speech on how her faith helped her to continue to compete (and win) in surfing, despite having only one arm. Flyleaf singer Lacey Sturm's testimony was a tearjerker. It's amazing what we humans endure apart from God and what we overcome with Him.

"Everything that we've ever done we've always stepped out by faith," Ries says. "We're not funded by anybody or any church. Calvary Chapel Diamond Bar has given us a couple office spaces for our small team to hold the product and to run the day-to-day operations." When you look at Christianity today," he explains, "you got guys begging for money on TV, you got different pastors that aren't taking the time to come down to be with the people and hang out with people. Or, they become celebrities, in a sense, and that's not biblical at all."

Ries along with P.O.D singer Sonny Sandoval, ex-Korn member Brian "Head" Welch, Flyleaf's Lacey Sturm, and high-flying motocrosser Ronnie Faisst began The Whosoevers, a name inspired from John 3:16. While these five personalities are widely recognized, anyone with a desire to know Jesus qualifies to be a Whosoever. It's apparent that religion has gotten a bad rap over the years. The Whosoevers' vision is that people of every kind can have a relationship with God right now – not after they've become good, churchy people. "We are not judging anybody, affirms Ries. "The bottom line what's going on right now in the world is there's a weak watered-down Christianity and people look at the Bible like a salad bar. Where the power comes in our life as Christians is obedience to God – denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Jesus."

"The whole thing with The Whosoevers is that it's at everyone's availability," Ries says on getting everyone together in one place at one time. Whether speaking at a Los Angeles high school, a church in New Zealand, or wherever he and his fellow knuckleheads are led, The Whosoevers live for the great commission. "There's no structure to it. We plan an event, and if everyone's available, we do it. No one's in bondage or tied down to anything with us. The only necessity to be involved is that you keep the temple clean. We don't compromise. We gotta walk with God hard-core. We got to take the Bible for what it says. Jesus associated himself with sinners. That's what we got to do. Jesus in the Bible never said go to church and build the kingdom in church and build it and they will come. He said go out to the world and make disciples of the nations. With this ministry, we're literally taking what the Bible says and we're putting it into action, going to the other side of the world."

Christ loves the hopeless sinner. As a son of a preacher, one might think that Ries would have averted all the reckless, prodigal living he experienced at an age when most kids haven't yet learned to strike a match.

"I grew up as a pastor's kid, but I was the same as any other kid. I was always drawn to the world my whole life. I always wanted the forbidden fruit, I guess. The church stuff that was going on wasn't appealing to me, so I just backslid. I got into porn when I was in first, second grade. Got my hands on cigarettes in second, third grade. In high school I got into weed and then coke, acid – all that stuff – and it just progressed. I dropped out of school, started doing graphic design, and started working in the music industry. Then I hooked up with C1rca footwear and started managing their skateboard team with all my drugs and alcohol and problems. Everything just escalated."

After years of drug abuse and prodigal living, Ries met Jesus in a Panama City hotel room. When we're as hopeless as the dying can be, He will seek us out in the most sordid places, even five-star hotels.

"After nineteen years I just found myself in a room in Panama City going, "alright dude, I'm over this. If there is a god I want to know if he's real. I was empty. I had everything I wanted. I was traveling the world nine months of the year in every country. I had money, cars, girls – the whole thing. I just called out the Name the Lord and gave my life to Him and He just started transforming my life."

Ries recalls meeting P.O.D. frontman, Sonny Sandoval. "I met Sonny four years before I gave my life to the Lord at my office. I was giving him product, shoes and C1rca stuff. I called him up when I became a Christian and we started hanging out. We went to Israel together and he told me about the name The Whosoevers and I said, "Dude, if you're serious, I can put this together." I helped him put it together and now we're in The Whosoevers." You hear about John the Baptist. He was out in the wilderness – and the wilderness always represents the world. He was for the common folks. I think that's where The Whosoevers comes in. It's such a powerful name, The Whosoevers. A "whosoever" is anybody. We do have a lot of high-profile people involved, but we're coming in under this umbrella, saying, "We're just anybody," and when you come to our event you're going to see us hanging out with the people."

"Religion is man reaching up to God and a relationship with Jesus Christ is God reaching down to man. So I AM... is a threat formalized religion. He was before the beginning. He was before all these religions."

Click the link below to see all the action of this year's The Whosoevers event, including live musical performances from Listener, Dominic Balli, Icon for Hire, and Love and Death.

thewhosoevers.com/archives

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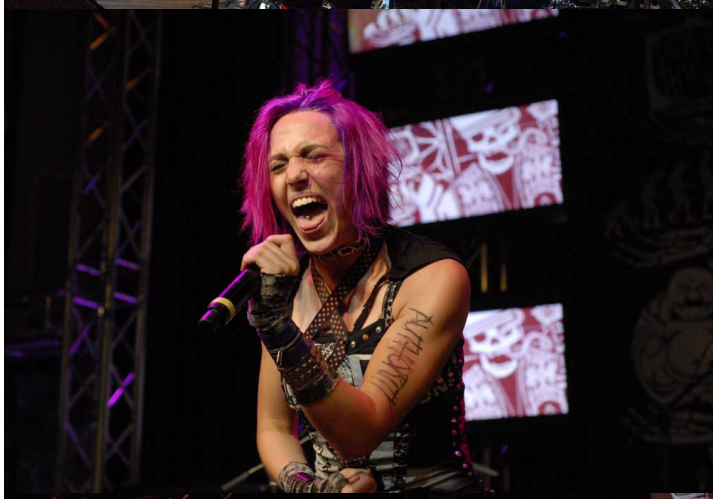
BY CHARLIE STEFFENS



To the top: Love & Death; Listener; Icon For Hire; Dominic Balli. Photos by Charlie Steffens

From the top: Dominic Balli (band); Icon For Hire; Listener; Love & Death. Photos by Charlie Steffens

AT DALLAS' SOUTH BY SO WHAT FESTIVAL IN MARCH, TO SPEAK OF WOLVES VOCALIST GAGE SPEAS SPENT THE FEW MINUTES BEFORE CALL TIME VOMITING DUE TO INTENSE STOMACH PAIN.

"Right before we were walking on, the dudes were sitting there sound checking and I was leaning up against Aaron's cabs, just puking my guts out," said Speas. However, he pulled through the show and the meet and greet at their merch table afterwards, throwing up intermittently after the set, sometimes having to interrupt the signing of an album or t-shirt to vomit. "I ended up going to the hospital and it turned out that I had gallstones and pancreatitis and I was dying while playing that show." The To Speak of Wolves frontman has now fully recovered after surgery to remove his gallbladder and a few cancelled tour dates.

This was good news for the North Carolina-based veterans in more ways than one. Their anticipated follow up to *Myself < Letting Go* has already created a great deal of buzz and their aggressive touring schedule has not damaged the band's reputation in the slightest. *Find Your Worth, Come Home* (releasing on Solid State Records 5/22) finds the band at their most confident and comfortable with their style. "I think that when we got together to write this record there was nobody in the world we knew better than ourselves, because we spend every moment of every day with each other. And that allowed us to write the record that we wanted to write," says drummer Phil Chamberlain.

Though *Find Your Worth, Come Home* may be the album that To Speak of Wolves wanted to write, it is arguably more accessible than their Solid State debut. Through growth in songwriting, member changes and finding a sound in which they feel confident, *Find Your Worth, Come Home* is not only several musical steps forward, but it also provides a driving, busy and somewhat chaotic sound that has gained a great deal of traction with listeners in recent years. Both the interviewed band members described their influences for this album as "all over the place," with artists ranging from Trent Reznor and Led Zeppelin to Mastodon and Pianos Become The Teeth. But it was more generally an attempt to make a record that was both original and true to their live performance.

When asked if the record was a departure from their previous sound, Chamberlain responded, "It's a very different record, in my opinion. Gage was our singer on this record and he wasn't on the last record and that alone is a big change." Having had access to a pre-release copy, I can agree. The album has an Oh, Sleeper feel with some of the chaos of Norma Jean infused, while retaining the Deftones-esque moments that were done so well in *Myself < Letting Go*. From these influences however, they have crafted a distinct and unique sound that would be difficult to mistake for the many other artists in their genre. And not only has the album seen To Speak of Wolves' sound mature, it is also more accessible musically, as well as in terms of lyrical themes. Lyrically, the album came out of specific personal tragedy and hardship from the divorce of Speas' parents; more generally, it addresses the loss of loved ones. However, Speas' emphasizes the thrust of his lyrical ideas: "Even after all of those things happened, you can still rise up … and be whoever you want to be." The band also recorded at Glow In The Dark Studios in Atlanta, Georgia, famous for making raw and honest records with a near slavish devotion to live sound, having recorded artists such as The Chariot, My Epic and As Cities Burn. "We've been chomping at the bit, ready to do something with this record for so long and it's turned out exactly how we wanted it, really," says founding member Phil Chamberlain of their recording experience. So mark your calendars for May 22nd and pick up *Find Your Worth, Come Home*.

One seemingly unavoidable topic when discussing To Speak of Wolves is the familial ties between Spencer (frontman for post-hardcore giants Underoath) and Phil Chamberlain. When asked about the connection and its effect on the band, Chamberlain simply described the connection as "a double edged sword" in terms of publicity. Positive publicity from the connection with Underoath has been beneficial to the band, but hasty judgments and assumptions about To Speak of Wolves have also sprung from the association. "I think it kind of affects the band, but in a positive way, because they (the members of Underoath) want the best for us", says vocalist Gage Speas. Phil Chamberlain also described his brother as his best friend in previous interviews and has said that Spencer showed him the ropes of the music business.

As mentioned, To Speak of Wolves has spent much, maybe a majority, of their time as a band on the road. They have toured with heavyweights such as August Burns Red, Between The Buried And Me, Underoath and Emery, but have also done their time on smaller tours with My Epic, The Great Commission and Before There Was Rosalyn. But touring life can also be taxing on relationships inside and outside of the band. "It's tough to maintain a relationship for sure, whether it be with a girlfriend, wife, your parents, friends or whatever. Some of the friends I grew up with, for example. All of sudden they don't relate to you as much anymore and you don't relate to them, because your stories don't make sense to someone who's not gone all the time," says Chamberlain. Vocalist Gage Speas added, "You really find out who your friends are when you are gone nine months out of the year." And on smaller tours particularly, there is little of the glamour that is often imagined; most often bands stay in pre-arranged host homes, cheap motels, or, on rough nights, in their vans. However, bands keep doing it year after year, often thanks to fans and the hospitality of kind strangers. Yet To Speak of Wolves has a history of aggressive touring and the difficulties thereof have yet to deter them. At press time, they will have already embarked on the *Find Your Worth Tour*, which will continue through the end of May with Harp And Lyre, as well as Solid State newcomers Wolves At The Gate. They also shared that they have recently confirmed a tour for the end of July, but we'll have to wait for that announcement. They will also be appearing at a number of festivals, including Ichthus, Lifest and Alive Festival.

I believe we'll see To Speak of Wolves' sophomore album finding both good critical reception and enthusiastic responses from fans. With an honest and real record and a penchant for hitting venues across the country hard, fast and often, To Speak of Wolves would have a difficult time not creating a stir with this album.

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BY GERALD DYSON

FLYLEAF HAS LOST ONE OF ITS FAMILY MEMBERS VIATHE SUDDEN DEATH OF LONGTIME SOUNDMAN RICH CALDWELL. THE BAND IS DOING WHAT ANY FAMILY DOES – RALLYING AS A COMMUNITY. THEY'RE THROWING A BENEFIT SHOW ON 5/20 IN DALLAS. GUITARIST SAMEER BHATTACHARYA CHECKS IN...

What do you most remember about Rich? Tell me some stories that will make us laugh. Tell us something sad that will make us cry.
I remember being in Adelaide at the end of an Australian tour with Deftones. We were heading to the airport when we realized that none of us had been in the water. So we got the driver to stop at some place by the ocean – probably at Rich's request! We all piled out of the van, but we didn't have our swim trunks, since all the band and crew were in one van together our luggage had to be in a separate van that had already made its way to the airport. But that didn't stop us! Rich, Pat, our guitar tech Chris and I got down to our underwear and jumped off the pier 30 ft down into the clearest bluest ocean I'd ever seen. That only lasted twenty or thirty minutes, because we had to make our flight, but it's one of my favorite memories of Rich. He grabbed life by the horns. He never let one moment go to waste. That was Rich. The photograph of us jumping off that pier in Australia is one of my favorite of all time.

Who thought of the benefit concert idea? What is the practical need for it and what will it be like?
We didn't think twice about it. No one person brought it up. Once we heard what happened we immediately thought about how his wife Katy and their two year old son Kirby were going to get through this. We knew we would need to help, because that's what family does. That's exactly what they are to us.

This death was unexpected and came at a time when Rich was needed most. They have been living in what is supposed to be a temporary arrangement, because Rich was in the middle of building their home. He had just landed a steady gig with a Texas country artist and was going to be able to be home every week to see his family and bring home a steady check. That isn't easy to find in this business. Katy and Kirby's loss is a heavy blow and we are doing all we can to help them. We love them.

What else would you like to say?
The benefit concert is going to be on May 20th at The Palladium Ballroom in Dallas. It is sponsored by 102.1 The Edge. All proceeds will be given to Rich's wife, Katy and their two-year-old Kirby to help cover funeral costs and living expenses during this time of their sudden and unexpected loss. We appreciate all of you and can't wait to see you there! It will be a Flyleaf show for the history books!

Briefly, what's new with Flyleaf? What is on the horizon for y'all?
We have just finished recording our third album, which sounds amazing. We're all very excited about it! It is the best collection of songs Flyleaf has written to date. I absolutely believe that. Our first single, "New Horizons," will be out very soon. We are shooting the music video next week. The full album will be out this summer, and we will be touring this fall. Be sure and follow us on twitter @ flyleafmusic for all the latest updates!

Lacy

Sameer and Jared

Sameer

Pat

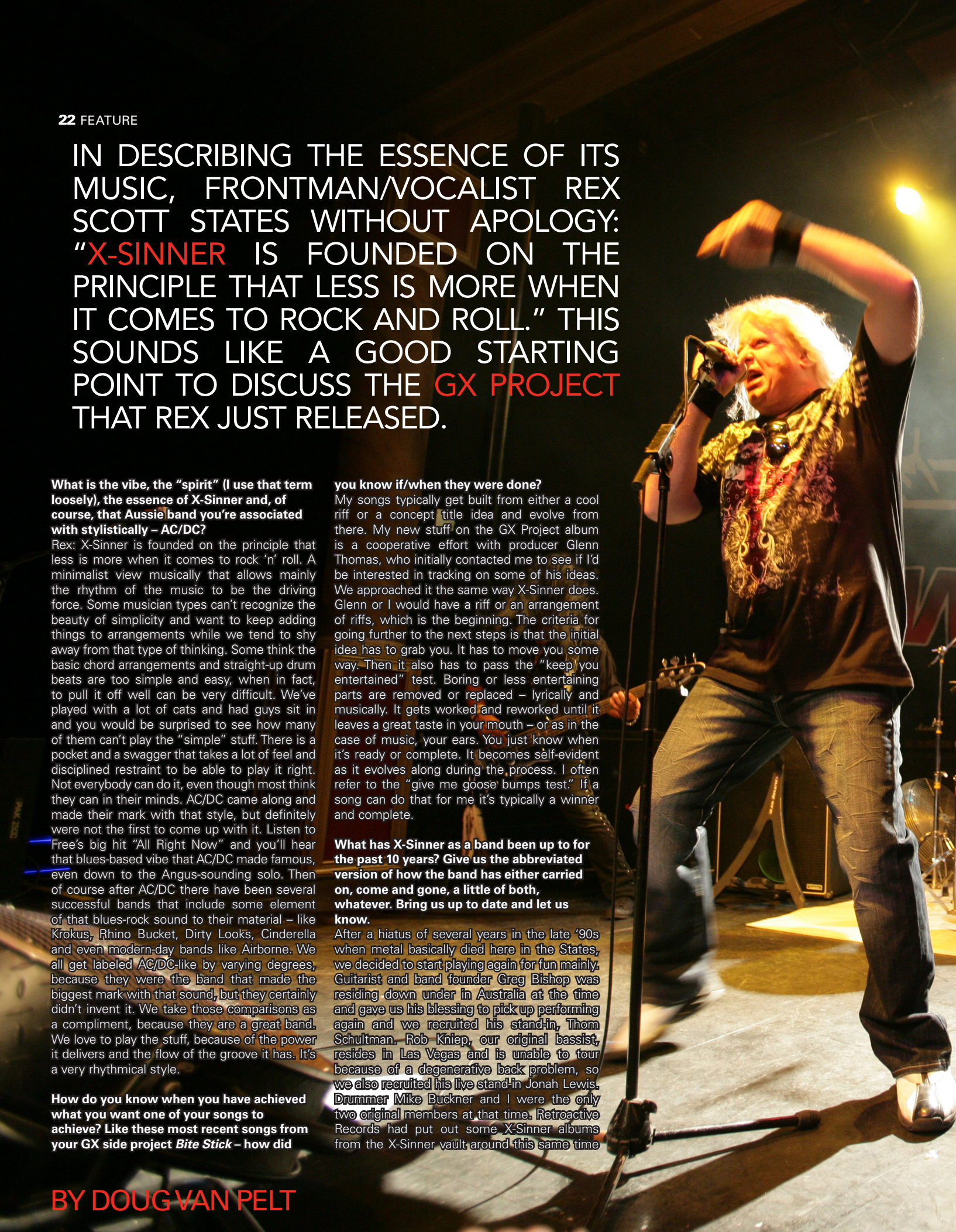
James [Photos: Greg Watermann]

REPORT BY DVP

Rich

IN DESCRIBING THE ESSENCE OF ITS MUSIC, FRONTMAN/VOCALIST REX SCOTT STATES WITHOUT APOLOGY: "X-SINNER IS FOUNDED ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT LESS IS MORE WHEN IT COMES TO ROCK AND ROLL." THIS SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD STARTING POINT TO DISCUSS THE GX PROJECT THAT REX JUST RELEASED.

BY DOUG VAN PELT



What is the vibe, the "spirit" (I use that term loosely), the essence of X-Sinner and, of course, that Aussie band you're associated with stylistically – AC/DC?

Rex: X-Sinner is founded on the principle that less is more when it comes to rock 'n' roll. A minimalist view musically that allows mainly the rhythm of the music to be the driving force. Some musician types can't recognize the beauty of simplicity and want to keep adding things to arrangements while we tend to shy away from that type of thinking. Some think the basic chord arrangements and straight-up drum beats are too simple and easy, when in fact, to pull it off well can be very difficult. We've played with a lot of cats and had guys sit in and you would be surprised to see how many of them can't play the "simple" stuff. There is a pocket and a swagger that takes a lot of feel and disciplined restraint to be able to play it right. Not everybody can do it, even though most think they can in their minds. AC/DC came along and made their mark with that style, but definitely were not the first to come up with it. Listen to Free's big hit "All Right Now" and you'll hear that blues-based vibe that AC/DC made famous, even down to the Angus-sounding solo. Then of course after AC/DC there have been several successful bands that include some element of that blues-rock sound to their material – like Krokus, Rhino Bucket, Dirty Looks, Cinderella and even modern-day bands like Airborne. We all get labeled AC/DC-like by varying degrees, because they were the band that made the biggest mark with that sound, but they certainly didn't invent it. We take those comparisons as a compliment, because they are a great band. We love to play the stuff, because of the power it delivers and the flow of the groove it has. It's a very rhythmical style.

How do you know when you have achieved what you want one of your songs to achieve? Like these most recent songs from your GX side project *Bite Stick* – how did you know if/when they were done?

My songs typically get built from either a cool riff or a concept title idea and evolve from there. My new stuff on the GX Project album is a cooperative effort with producer Glenn Thomas, who initially contacted me to see if I'd be interested in tracking on some of his ideas. We approached it the same way X-Sinner does. Glenn or I would have a riff or an arrangement of riffs, which is the beginning. The criteria for going further to the next steps is that the initial idea has to grab you. It has to move you some way. Then it also has to pass the "keep you entertained" test. Boring or less entertaining parts are removed or replaced – lyrically and musically. It gets worked and reworked until it leaves a great taste in your mouth – or as in the case of music, your ears. You just know when it's ready or complete. It becomes self-evident as it evolves along during the process. I often refer to the "give me goose bumps test." If a song can do that for me it's typically a winner and complete.

What has X-Sinner as a band been up to for the past 10 years? Give us the abbreviated version of how the band has either carried on, come and gone, a little of both, whatever. Bring us up to date and let us know.

After a hiatus of several years in the late '90s when metal basically died here in the States, we decided to start playing again for fun mainly. Guitarist and band founder Greg Bishop was residing down under in Australia at the time and gave us his blessing to pick up performing again and we recruited his stand-in, Thom Schultman. Rob Kniep, our original bassist, resides in Las Vegas and is unable to tour because of a degenerative back problem, so we also recruited his live stand-in Jonah Lewis. Drummer Mike Buckner and I were the only two original members at that time. Retroactive Records had put out some X-Sinner albums from the X-Sinner vault around this same time

which started causing a resurgence of not only our old fanbase, but was introducing the band to new younger fans. That then led to the idea of putting out a totally all-new-songs album as opposed to old demos or previously released material. I talked to Greg about it and he and I began writing and tracking the parts for it. We would each track in our respective home studios and send audio files back and forth via the internet and *World Covered In Blood* was born. Rob was in good enough health to travel to my house in Southern California to track the bass and Greg flew in from Australia to track all of his final guitar tracks and solos. I played the drums and some of the rhythm guitars and had the dubious task of mixing it. Greg eventually moved back to the States and took his rightful place as the lead guitarist of the band. So now Greg, Mike and myself are the original players live. Of course I'm not completely original myself, as I replaced Dave Robbins after the first album, *Get It*. Rob is still part of the band, but as the studio bassist. We use live players in his stead. We've entertained the idea of having Glenn Thomas from my GX Project come out with us live, so we can play some of the new GX material in our X-Sinner set. We would trade off bass and guitars, because on GX all those killer guitar solos you hear are Glenn. Glenn would probably play bass on the X-Sinner material portion of a live set. X-Sinner "regrouped" has gotten to perform in Europe a few times as well as here in the States and Canada and it's been a blast. We've opened for Warrant and other mainstream artists, which also has been great. Unfortunately, Greg had to undergo back surgery himself this spring, which has put a hold on what was to be our probable last album, *Goin' Out With A Bang*. It allowed me time to do the GX Project, *Bite Stick* album, however. We hope to pick up playing dates once he is fully recovered if he doesn't decide to retire or cannot perform – which is always possible. I have an additional opportunity with Glenn and the GX thing, so who knows where things will lead. GX is just coming out and is already getting a lot of attention and radio buzz.

Why couldn't Clarence Thomas be confirmed as a Supreme Court justice? He was a great candidate. He was a minority. What went wrong?
(laughs) I guess you can't be sexually aggressive and be a supreme court judge. (laughs again)

What are your plans for the band for the near future?
To play some more fun shows. It's much nicer now than when we would tour in the old days. Now we just fly in and play. We try to make little vacations out of the trips and take extended stays when we can and enjoy what the areas have to offer. Switzerland and Germany were awesome. If we get around to recording *Goin' Out With A Bang* or not we still plan on having an enjoyable time performing somewhere. A lot of the album is written, but it may end up on GX2 if X-Sinner and Greg in particular wants to retire.

How would you classify or summarize your lyrical approach these days?
I try to write lyrics that are entertaining and, if I do have any real point to make in a given song, I try to be creative in how I say it. I like lyrics that can be interpreted in different ways by various listeners

continued on page 54

Photo: Mike Bolli

THERE IS SO MUCH THAT COULD BE ASKED OF THE FRONTI A BAND THAT HAS BEEN PUTTING OUT MUSIC AND TOURI OVER 15 YEARS. A LOT HAS CHANGED IN THE MUSIC INDU THAT TIME. BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST. AFTER BREAKING TI LONG-TIME RECORD LABEL TOOTH AND NAIL, ANDREW S OF PROJECT 86 IS SET TO INDEPENDENTLY RELEASE *WA THE SIREN* SOMETIME IN JUNE OR JULY OF THIS YEAR.

A couple of hours after Project 86 began their set with two new songs off of their upcoming self-release, *Wait For the Siren*, to a crowd of about a thousand at the Purple Door music festival, we sat down with Andrew Schwab to discuss the new album, and the reinvention of the band. His new band members Scott Davis on drums, Dustin Lowry on guitar and Mikee "Norman" Williams on bass, were there for moral support.

Project has in the past released independently, and on both a small and major record label, during their history as a band. With the new album, the band is joining in on what seems to be the latest bandwagon. The record is essentially being put out by the fans. "I think probably having the fans be the record label and knowing that the funding that we are getting from them, there doesn't have to be some sort of management battle over getting money to do this or do that, because the fans have already donated money to do everything that we need to do," Andrew asserted.

Schwab and clan received more than the minimum goal after setting up a Kickstarter campaign to fund the cost of making the album. Things are a bit different than when Project released *Songs to Burn Your Bridges By* independently in 2003 after a stint with Atlantic Records ended. "With Kickstarter, it is such a well-developed phenomenon now. We kind of knew what we were getting ourselves into. Now it didn't make it any less exciting or I won't even say stressful. But there was that tension there like, 'Wow. What's this going to be like?' But when you sign up with Kickstarter as an artist and you set a funding goal," Schwab explains. "And fans respond immediately. And you see emails every time someone donates or backs the project. It's super exciting, because every moment you are kind of on the edge of your seat during those thirty days or however many days you are raising funds to record your album."

So with an independent release and new band members, is Project 86 going through an evolution or transformation? Or perhaps this is a progression? Though these terms may adequately describe the path the group is taking, Andrew claimed with assurance that it is more of a reinvention. "There's a lyric on the first song on the record, one of the songs we played today. It says, 'Can you smell it in the air, my brethren, it's the beautiful stench of reinvention.' It's definitely a new chapter. All of the branding for this chapter of the band is just P-eight-six. That's the band. That's the title." Andrew continued, "So, we want people to know this is fresh. And I think the thing that is the most fresh is the spirit that's coming out of the music. Whereas previous records might have been a little dirgy or a little dark in that self-explorational kind of way. This is uplifting. It's still Project 86. It's still heavy. It still has those same emotions. But the spirit driving it, you'll feel it when you listen to it. There is an element of conquering that is more prevalent on this album than any of the previous ones."

Following the tweets from Andrew or the band during the recording process, fans may have noticed various folks entering the studio to lend their talents to the mix. Rocky Gray, drummer for Living Sacrifice who used to play in Evanescence is on the record. Cody Driggers from The Wedding plays bass on the record. Blake Martin from A Plea for Purging and Andrew Welch from Disciple both lend guitar skills. Bruce Fitzhugh from Living Sacrifice and Brian "Head" Welch each provide guest vocals. Andrew recruited the whole band The Wedding, "because they have really good gang vocals." Additional instrumentation was added by a hammered dulcimer player, a mandolin player, and a Uilleann pipe player. "There is a tiny bit of the Celtic influence without totally committing to that. Like, we are not trying to be Flogging Molly or anything like that," Schwab affirmed.

The band opened their set earlier that day with two new songs, something that is out of the ordinary for Project 86, according to Schwab. But he and the band were confident in the songs. It turned out to be a good choice, as the audience got involved right away – quickly singing along as if these were old favorites. One of the new songs is called "Fall Goliath Fall." The confidence in the new material was perhaps sooner than expected, as Schwab recounts, "I sent Scott, our drummer, a copy of an early mix of it and he wrote me text messages back. I got this string of text messages and my phone was sitting across the room and I was just like, 'Who is texting me over and over again?' He just lighted me up. He just said, 'Man, I just got chills. This is our year. This is the year for P86. This is going to be incredible.' And that has been the reaction. Over and over again people are telling me, 'I got chills when I heard that song.' That's cool. That's what we want."

Lyrically, Schwab recalls previous albums may have been a bit more cryptic whereas *Wait for the Siren* is a story or picture. Apparently, more than one theme is expressed throughout the album. One is the metaphor of David and Goliath. Schwab explains, "There is a lyric that my band has been saying during our sound checks during the day. And I thought they were making fun of me. But they were actually just saying, 'No, we really like this lyric.' And it sort of symbolizes one theme of the record. It is 'The penitent man lays low.' It's basically the idea [to] walk softly and carry an accurate sling. So one theme is just overcoming the giants, the goliaths in our lives. Whether that be battles with addiction or generational curses. There is [also] a song on the record that is about generational curses and breaking those and facing very real obstacles, but it is all cloaked in a metaphor of ancient battle. So hand-to-hand combat with swords."

The "battle" has taken place. The album is recorded. But the finishing touches are still to come. The exact date of release was yet to be determined at the time we sat down with P86, and the first radio single was not decided. But the assurance on the new course the band has chosen was evident. Andrew Schwab is not willing to give up and retreat. Based on the response so far, the outlook is good.

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BY KIM FLANDERS

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Photo: Michael Todaro

IT'S A LITTLE IRONIC
ALBUM *THE LOUDEST*
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In fact, the idea for the record's name has more to do with a 19th century volcano than any rock noises emitted through a Marshall amp. Krakatoa – while undeniably loud – was, and is a reminder to one and all that time is short, life is finite and mastering loving one another is the life skill that matters more than any other. Drummer and primary lyricist Steve Hindalong can explain.

"There's a song called 'Learning To Fly,'" he says, "and I made a reference to Krakatoa, that volcano that went off in the late 1800s in Indonesia and killed 40,000 people. And the song's about living each day as if every day is important, and, you know, with the fact that all of these disasters continue to happen, we're reminded about how vulnerable we all are. When I lived in Los Angeles, it was the earthquakes – there was eminent doom. Since I moved here to Tennessee, it's always tornados, the tornado season. You realize there's nothing we can do. We can't control such things. We could be gone, sucked into the stratosphere tomorrow or today. Any of us that have had some health scares – I'm old enough where I've had some friends that have died of cancer, and I've had some health scares myself – realize that we could die and that we are for sure going to [die] before too long. But I feel that we are here for a purpose. And that we are here to learn to love. That's our challenge, and that's the theme of the record. Now why Krakatoa? Why the loudest sound ever heard? That's just because I learned when I looked that up in Wikipedia, it said that Krakatoa was the loudest sound ever heard according to scientists who document such things. And I just thought that was an interesting phrase and I wrote that down and I emailed that to the guys, and somebody said, 'That could be the title for the record.'"

The Choir, which has been making music together since the mid-'80s, has become almost like a family over the years. These aren't just musicians in a band; they're more like a band of brothers. One such brotherly bond is the one forged over the years between Hindalong and Chandler. This emotional sonic created between two dear friends, is nearly Krakatoa-ian.

"I have a song called 'Melodious,' which is about my friendship with Tim Chandler," Hindalong elaborates. "In that song, I have the line, 'The sound of a true friend's heart is the loudest sound ever heard.' And that's the only literal reference, and really it's a figurative reference. I guess the literal meaning is the Krakatoa volcano, but the figurative…that's the most powerful thing, [which] is friendship, the sound of a true friend's heart."

The album's theme about learning how to love begs the question: Is Steve getting better at learning how to love, or is it that the older he gets, the more he realizes just how much he falls short of the Biblical commandment to love one another?

"I think both," Hindalong answers honestly. "I think we get better and we learn more and more how short we fall. Hopefully, we're becoming more and more humble. Life has a way of humbling us all. I think it's really important that we keep on growing, that we keep evolving, that we keep learning and almost more importantly, that we keep unlearning. Because I think one of the biggest mistakes is to make up your mind and to think you know, especially when it comes to spiritual things. Organized religion is so much

BY DAN MACINTOSH

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S-RHYTHMIC BASS PARTS.

about figuring things out and creating dogmas and doctrines, creeds, you know? In the 4th century they came up with the Nicene Creed. Of course, Jesus didn't recite that because that was 350 years later. They came up with it and they had it all figured out. All put into order." However, Hindalong believes that God remains mysterious, and not completely knowable. That's part of the beauty of the faith life.

The Choir continues to explore the mysteries of life through its music. While many bands burn out, disband and only reform if the money is right, The Choir's task of making music only seems to get easier as the years go by.

"Making music with your friends, what could be more fun than that?" Hindalong asks rhetorically. "It's fairly easy for Derri and I to write songs together. We don't do it that often. If it's not on an album there's really no other songs. We don't have outtakes. People ask for outtakes. We don't have any. But when we do do it, it's fairly effortless. The songs come quickly. I think that's because some time's passed and we've lived some life. The songs came quickly [on this album] and Tim Chandler was playing bass and he's probably one of my favorite musicians – of any kind of musician. He's just a very creative guy and a lot of fun. And then Dan [Michaels] played a little sax, which is great because horns are one of those things that just go in and out of style. When we first got started in the mid-'80s, I mean, everybody played sax. David Bowie played the sax, for heaven's sake! But then when it came to the '90s, it was, 'What are we going to do with sax?' But here now, all the cool young bands have horns."

Musical trends may come and go, but any band that can develop its own unique sound is worth its weight in gold. Certainly, one can hear where The Choir liberally borrowed from bands such as U2 back in the early days. However, one factor that stands out conspicuously on *The Loudest Sound Ever Heard* may be how The Choir's sound is now one of rock music's most distinctive sounds.

"A lot of it is just the different ways we play," notes, perhaps, The Choir's primary sonic architect, Derri Daugherty. "Guitar-wise, obviously, my thing is a lot of effects and echoes. I like playing a lot of high lines. And Tim is like an aggressive bass player. He's like the more rock of all of us. He's so aggressive that he gives me the freedom to separate the frequencies when recording. I like to have a lot of space between the low end and the guitars and the upper midrange thing, and the vocal kind of sitting in the middle." And then there's Steve's drumming. "If I come to Steve with a song in my head, and I have a certain idea in my head that I might have heard a certain way," Daugherty comments, "he's going to play it completely differently drum-wise than what I might have heard and bring his own kind of thing, which really keeps – between him and Tim – it really keeps us from sounding like anyone else."

It is unlikely The Choir will ever rival Kraktoa when it comes to bellowing high-volume rock 'n' roll. However, as long as they keep doing that thing that Daugherty describes as keeping them "from sounding like anyone else," all will be truly well in the choir loft.

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Photo: Jennifer Balaska

for today: full t

MATTIE MONTGOMERY IS A MAN OF MANY HATS. AS A HUSBAND AND A NEW FATHER, HE DIVVIES UP HIS TIME BETWEEN WRITING, TOURING AND PERFORMING WITH FOR TODAY, DOING HIS SPOKEN WORD MINISTRY AND THE OTHER WAYS HE AND HIS WIFE CANDICE SERVE DAILY. "SLEEP IS SOMETHING I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO WHEN I DIE," MATTIE SAYS LIGHT-HEARTEDLY.

Let's add another entry to an already lengthy resume. Mattie started his first band with some friends when he was in fourth grade. They called their group "Small Talk," drawing inspiration from dc Talk. "I was eight-years old. My father had just died. And about a week after that dc Talk came to my city for a week to get ready for the *Jesus Freak Tour*. The people around the event they heard about me and that my dad had died and they thought it might be cool for me to be able to hang out with them and meet them and see what they do. So every day after school for a whole week I came in and got to hang out with dc Talk when they were doing rehearsals, eat their food and rock out and sing on the microphone and go wild with them. There's a confession I don't know if I've ever made."

Immortal, is the fourth For Today studio release, features special guest spots from Jake Luhrs of August Burns Red and Sonny Sandoval from P.O.D. "The idea behind *Immortal* is simply this," Mattie says, "that when this genre of music fades away, when our band fades away and even in the past when other preachers and other ministers and ministries have faded away, the Gospel has prevailed. The idea that we wanted to convey is that we, For Today, are not the pinnacle of spirituality, but that the gospel of Jesus Christ is. We don't preach something that we just made up. We don't preach something that we thought was a good idea. We preach something that is true and has been true for generations and generations before us. It's something that will continue to be true for generations and generations after. So regardless of your theological camp, or how you were raised, regardless of where in history you exist, the gospel of Jesus Christ is immortal. It's indestructible. It has prevailed. It will continue to prevail for all eternity."

There wouldn't be a shortage of subjects to talk about while interviewing Mattie. At the risk of upsetting him, however, I wanted to read an unfavorable review of *Immortal*, which had yet to be released. My motive for reading the horrid appraisal was to move our talk to a brave, perhaps uncharted place, instead of having a somewhat predictable question/answer kind of interview. I said, "Mattie, I've got a not-so good review of *Immortal*. Can I read it to you?" He said, "Sure."

> (an excerpt of the review) *For Today has lost a step. Immortal, the Iowa-bred quintet's fourth full-length record, gives listeners nothing new to the metal scene. It's got almost every cliche you have heard from a record in this genre: Soapbox talking over screams at the end of "My Confession," not one but TWO instrumental tracks to prove to everyone they're actually musicians who like music other than metal (complete with strings!), war, fighting, calls-to-arms metaphors. The structure of every song is made of three ingredients: two-step, chorus, breakdown...*

It became almost painful as I nervously read this harsh two-hundred-some-odd-word review as I envisioned Mattie losing it. Instead, after a long two seconds of silence, he said, "Alright. There's a reason why I haven't read any reviews. [laughs] One

hrottle

BY CHARLIE STEFFENS

"There's a reason why I haven't read any reviews."

of the things – just kind of being in the position that I'm in – and we as a group are in – is that I have to be disconnected from the opinion of both positive and negative. If I'm willing to receive praises being lavished on us and thanks and accolades for amazing things then it's gonna hurt if that ever fades away, and we're gonna find ourselves just as damaged and just as broken as if we were to take to heart every harsh word that anyone has ever spoken to us. So, to be honest, with this record I'll probably just allow the reviews to come and the Facebook comments to rollout and let people say what they will. I'm just going to continue to answer the call in my life and love my wife and son."

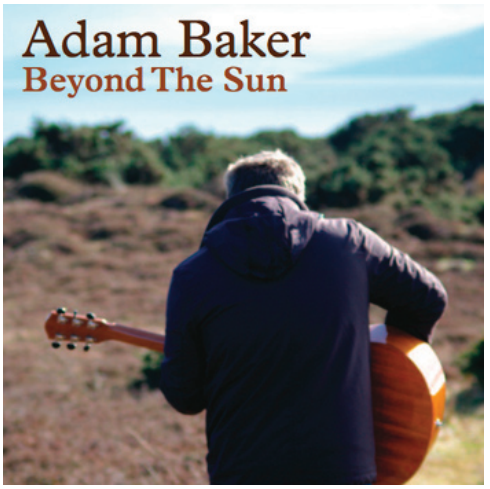
On negative press he adds, "There have been a couple comments that come back to me about people saying that the lyrics are trite and kind of basic and they're not really deep. They already have this amazing revelation why I'm not going out responding to everybody that posts their opinion on Facebook about our band. If I were to respond to people that said that my answer would be, 'If you want deep, come and listen to me preach.' Come and find one of the guys in my band and talk to them about what the Lord has been revealing to them in their private time. Deep is for discipleship. Our band exists for evangelism. The reason that our band is a band is to bring people that do not follow Jesus into a place in which they're following Jesus. We have other things out there. For example, my speaking CDs. I also go around and preach at churches and colleges and things like that. There are a couple of guys in my band that preach in places. We, as men of God, are positioned to be able to take people a lot deeper in discipleship with our lives than we can with our music. So people that have a lot to say about our lyrics not being what they want, I would say, 'Well, that's okay. That's probably a good thing, because that means you're already saved. Now it's time for you to move on from the milk and start getting to the real food – to the meat,' referring to the spiritual immaturity mentioned in Hebrews 5:12-14. "For better or for worse we understand that our band is, at least to some extent, called to give people hope. I don't get up on stage and talk about the prophetic destiny of our generation in between songs. I talk about the Gospel, because that's what our band exists for."

"I feel like more than ever while writing *Immortal* I had my finger on the pulse of what it is God has called us as a band to be and to do," he explains soberly. "I'm sure there are going to be people and bands that come to mind when I say this, but there are an infinite amount of people out there that call themselves ministers that have not yet found exactly what it is they're called do. They'll do a little bit here a little bit there, a little bit of this, and a little bit of that. It's just kind of disjointed and not really focused and there's a little bit for everybody, but the reality is that the reason that there's a little bit for everybody is because they're not sure what God has called them to do or be."

The track "Set Apart" is about putting ourselves in position to be most useful to God. For many that means giving up old playgrounds and playmates. "I understand that not everyone who follows our band is a Christian. Not everybody that follows our band is an atheist. That song is either for people that are Christians now or someday will be. I think that many Christians have this thought or this image in their mind of God as being Someone Who would be so forceful and forthright with His agenda in their life is that He would force it upon them and they just do whatever they want with their lives. And someday God will come and He will move them in the position that they were supposed to be in. The reality is that's not what God does at all. God is waiting for us to make ourselves available to His agenda and to His plan. That means that we have to – in faith – begin to sacrifice things in our lives. Sacrifice aspects of how we spend our time, the things that we think about, the things that we dwell on and some of our relationships. And that means for a lot of people – they're really not doing much of anything. They're just hanging out with Christian kids and reading their bible and praying and seeking the Lord and just purifying their life for a season. Once they become faithful with that then God will entrust them with the great and wondrous things that He's promised. But they have to prove their commitment to being set apart prior to the moment at which the Lord is able to entrust them any of these incredible things that they've been wanting.

"I lost about every friend I had," Mattie admits, recalling the adjustments he made when he earnestly decided to follow Jesus. "The first time I ever really responded to or received conviction from sin, I came home and there was a friend of mine that was living in my house that was bringing pornography into my house. He was bringing alcohol and drugs into my house. I was about 16 or 17 at the time. I don't know if anybody else has tried to explain what a porn video is to a seven-year-old girl, but I had to try to do that because my younger sister found his videos. I went home and I said to this guy, 'Listen, you can choose this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.' He wound up moving out of the house and told all my friends that I kicked him out for no reason and he wound up dropping out of school. I haven't talked to him in years, but last I heard about him he was in and out of jail with a pretty serious heroin addiction. The next day I called my girlfriend, who I had been sleeping with and I said, 'As much as I would like to be naïve enough to say that

I think we could stay together and stop having sex out of wedlock, I don't thing I'm man enough to do that at this point. We need to break it up and not even talk to each other anymore.' Then she went around school telling everybody that I broke up with her because she wasn't Christian enough for me and everyone thought that was the most insane thing they ever heard. I was losing a lot of friends because of it. I was marked in that moment for righteousness. I knew that I was to be set apart for the use of God and God alone. I didn't even have the right to my own life and I wound up losing friends because of it and I wound up losing social status, my reputation got hurt because of it, my feelings got hurt because of it. But the reason I am being used by God to change lives today is because I said yes to that conviction and did the adjustments necessary in my life to position my life to really go deep with Jesus."



"Intense and rich"
–Louder Than The Music.

MY NEW ALBUM IS A BLEND OF FOLK AND ROCK SOUNDS WITH SOME SURPRISES TOO. THE SONGS HAVE BEEN COMPARED BY MANY AS SOUNDING LIKE NEIL YOUNG AND FRANK TURNER. THE SONGS ARE SINCERE AND HONEST. SOME TALK ABOUT ISSUES THAT ARE NOT SO COMMON AMONGST POPULAR CHRISTIAN ARTISTS. IT MIGHT JUST BE WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR!

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What **Styx** Says

ONE THING THAT'S GREAT ABOUT INTERVIEWING ROCK VETERANS IS THAT THEIR EXPERIENCE OFTEN GIVES THEM A WEALTH OF INFORMATION AND INSIGHT TO SHARE. THUS, THE CONVERSATION I HAD WITH STYX BASSIST RICKY PHILLIPS WAS QUITE ENJOYABLE. AFTER SOME SURPRISING CHIT-CHAT AT THE START, WHERE WE LEARNED THAT WE LIVE ONLY A FEW MILES FROM EACH OTHER IN THE AUSTIN AREA, HE GLADLY ANSWERED ALL THE MANY QUESTIONS I HAD AND STARTED DROPPING A FEW GEMS HERE AND THERE – LIKE "MUSIC IS NOT A COMPETITION." I LOVE THAT ROCK WISDOM. BESIDES BEING A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE, HIS EASY-GOING ATTITUDE MADE IT CLEAR HE'D BE A BLAST TO HANG OUT WITH FOR A DAY, THAT'S FOR SURE.

Photo: Ash Newell

I'm curious how you ended up with Styx. What's the story of how that happened?
Ah. Wow, that's a good question. I actually met the guys in 1979. I was in a band called The Babys, which is a British band with John Waite as the lead singer.

Yeah, I've got a question about them later.
Okay. Well, we toured with those guys way back then and we would tour with Styx, Journey, AC/DC and Cheap Trick. Kinda all the bands that were big at that time. Tommy Shaw and I sort of became friends from that point on and then when Tommy was in Damn Yankees, I was in Bad English, so it was basically we just kinda stayed in touch. We didn't hang out or go to dinner or that kinda friendship, but we gravitated towards one another at industry functions and stuff. Just hanging out.

Around that time, the last project I really did was a record with Jimmy Page and David Coverdale and that was in the early '90s and everything was changing with downloads and music was just changing over to a new sound and I kind of really decided it was a good time to dig in and write. I'd always been a writer and gotten lucky with getting some songs into major films and thought, 'You know, I'm going to lean on that a little bit more.' So I started doing that and had been kind of away from doing much touring. I did a little bit with Ronny Montrose and a few other people, but I really was focusing on writing and trying to get songs placed and Tommy called me up and said, "Look man, would you consider touring again? Would you want to join Styx?" It was at a time where I had just finished a huge project and I was kinda beat up over writing a bunch of music and getting it recorded. I thought back and realized, 'I didn't start playing music to stare at a computer screen and be locked up in a room by myself writing music all the time,' you know? When you start playing guitar when you're 10, 11, 12 years old, starting your first bands and you're making the little girls scream and stuff ... it's kinda hard to get that out of your blood and then the little girls turn into big girls and it gets even better. And so, you know, all joking aside, it really is something ... I think the biggest deal of all and the best fulfillment is playing for a live audience and getting that interaction and I missed it. And so that was in 2003 and it's in the next year I will have played my thousandth show with Styx.

Wow.
Yeah.

I'm always impressed with musicians that can join another band. I don't know if the word journeymen would be the right fit, but uh … musicians learn a lot of material fast. How does one go about doing that? Like learning an entire set and stuff like that?
It's different. You know what's funny about that is I've recorded entire albums in a day. But that is short-term memory. You learn something... As a matter of fact Todd Sucherman and I used to do exactly that – and that's how I met Todd. Todd Sucherman is the drummer in Styx. He was voted best drummer of 2009 in the *Modern Drummer* readers' poll and he's always you know, right in the there at the top 3, probably. And Todd is just an amazing, amazing musician. He's got a photographic memory. And he and I would record in the studio. We would blow out, like, 10 songs in a day. And I thought, 'Okay, I can learn anything...' Well, it isn't exactly true, cause the Styx catalog not only is … there's a lot there, but Styx is one of those bands that never sings the same lyric in the second chorus as they did in the first. Third time it comes around it's even a little different. Theres a lot of segments there. It will go from 4/4 to 6/8 to, you know, 7/4. The time signatures change in the songs, but they do it suddenly, so it sounds like a nice fun melodic pop song when there's all this other dimension going on. So, I would

learn three songs and I thought, 'Oh, this is going to be a piece of cake,' and I would go and I'd learn the next three and I'd go, "Well, let me play the first three again," and I would have forgotten little key things in every one of those songs. So learning the Styx catalog was a little bit more daunting than I had experienced in the past with other bands. It's still a challenge, even though I've been playing it all this time. If we haven't played something in a while, somebody says, "Hey, let's do," whatever the song is, and I'll have to sit down for a minute and think of all those little idiosyncrasies that happen there that are known in Styx songs, so I make sure that I play it right. But it's fun. It keeps ya fresh, you know? You're not up there just phoning in your parts when your playing the Styx catalog. You are defiantly digging in. And last year we went out and did all of *The Grand Illusion* album the same way it was recorded. We took an intermission and came back and played all the *Pieces of Eight* album. We did 22 theaters that way and did an 11-camera shoot in Memphis. That DVD's coming out at the end of this month, as a matter of fact. It's just coming out next week. So, in doing so, we played songs that Styx had never performed live before, because those are pretty daunting vocals in some of these songs; but we said, "Let's do it," and it turned out great. So now we're even pulling out other songs that are a little deep cut songs that the diehard Styx fans know, but are not the big obvious hits. Sometimes now we'll start off with 5 or 6 hits and then go into some of these darker, B-side cuts that are a little bit more ballsy musically. And the audience seems to be just drinking it up and digging it, which is nice, because it allows us to keep it interesting. Then we come back and obviously finish up with big hits and songs that they're familiar with – that they can sing along to. But it gives the audience a little depth and I think, from what we're witnessing, they're getting something they thought they would never get. And for us it keeps it fresh. We're not phoning in our parts, which is something we can't stand. We try to change our set quite often, actually. We might stick with the same thing for 2 or 3 months, or sort of a derivative of it, and then change a couple songs. But what ends up happening is somebody comes up with an idea and that leads to another thing and all of a sudden we're doing a totally different set. Which we have a lot of people who come back year after year to see the band and it keeps them from having to witness the same thing that they saw last year.

What songs from The Grand Illusion and The Pieces of Eight are your favorite to play and why?
Wow. Um… I think the song "Fooling Yourself" is one of my favorite pieces of music written by Styx.

Good song.
Yeah. You know what I mean? It's not that smack you in the face pop song and it breaks off into some odd time signatures and it has a really cool instrumental section. Plus the vocals and the message behind the song are very strong. But there's something about that Tommy Shaw the looped guitar line that just repeats throughout that thing. It's just… I can't hum it or describe it, but as soon as you hear that, "Boom!," you know what song it is. You identify it and say, "Oh wow, that's Styx?" Because it isn't the obvious Styx song. But once it gets going it's got all those elements. All those Styx harmonies and dual guitar parts and cool keyboard sounds... So, I dig that one. There are a few songs I discovered that I didn't – to be honest – I really didn't know, because they were deep cuts. There's a song called " Aku-Aku," which is the very last song on the *Pieces of Eight* album. And it's very weird, man. It's trippy and it's a blast to play. But you would have to be a total diehard Styx fan to even know what that song is. Then there is the obvious "Renegade." It is one of the coolest rock songs ever, as far as I'm concerned, but there's, you know, "Blue Collar Man" and that stuff is so great. But some of the quirky odd tunes – even a song called "Lords Of the Ring," which is a real pompous sort of … Styx at its most pompous. It's like Queen meets … I don't even know what, but it's very cool. A lot of fun songs on those albums.

Yeah, almost a precursor to "Mr. Roboto"
Yeah, well, you know, that took a left turn. Maybe even a U-turn. But nevertheless, I will say this about "Roboto." As much fun as they made of that song, it's probably the song… If you were a kid at that time, which those people now are in their 30s and 40s. That's a song that everyone wants to hear, because you were a kid and you dug that. That was the best kid's rock song ever.

What are some funny stories that have happened with this incarnation of Styx?
Funny stories… The thing is … we've got a couple of guys in this band that could be on *Saturday Night Live*. I'm not even kidding. There's a lot of material that comes out of just hanging out with this crazy lot. Let me think if I can come up with something off the cuff... Well, I have a good one for ya. We just did the *Rosie O' Donnel* show and Lawrence Gowen, who has been playing with Styx for a number of years now is the keyboard player, but not the original keyboard player. So Rosie O' Donnel tried to make conversations: "So, you took Dennis DeYoung's place?" And he looked at her and said, "So, you took Oprah's place?"

(laughter)
But anyway. You know, this is the kind of stuff that happens. It's a nonstop repartee that just carries on. Nobody's serious. Well, everybody is very serious, but not at the same time. I mean, every day there is humor, and wherever we go it's just a fun time. It's a totally fun, but we're always paying attention to details. We come off the stage dripping wet with the towels around our neck going, "You know what, I think we should slow down the tempo to this" or "We should change that..." So, we're always hands on with the music and the show itself on how to make it better – but at the same time we have a lot of fun.

Well, tell me about your time with The Babys. That's one of my favorite bands from the '70s and '80s.
Ah – cool, man. Yeah, that was a fun time. That was my ... I was very naive. I thought I knew everything and I knew nothing. I look back at producers I worked with. They must have just been scratching their head. I think I was pretty likable in all of that, but I think I was a complete … you know, I really did think I knew everything. I look back at how I was and I think that's kinda why the music at that time… I wasn't alone in that, by the way. The other guys in the band thought they knew everything, too. We were so naive. We wrote really just street-level music. That was our lives. It was about our lives, you know? It was wine, women and song. It was totally what you go through as a young guy. Before I joined the Babys I had basically slept in the worst motels you've ever even thought of. You didn't even know how the thing could be standing. There's two beds, you know, when there's, like, six guys sleeping on floors and on whatever – and doing gigs and getting back in a van and traveling across the country. Playing every real two-bit bar there is. And then I ended up in LA and I got a gig in LA. I got lucky. I got an audition with a band that was kinda happening at the time in LA and I was seen by the sound man for The Babys and he asked me to come in for an audition. I ended up joining the band. And the next thing I know I'm playing this cool gig. I think David Lee Roth had broken his leg. Van Halen was supposed to play The Whiskey for New Year's and so they asked us to fill in. And that was my first gig with the band – playing at The Whiskey on New Year's. Kinda a high profile gig for LA on New Year's.

Like a radio show or something?
Well, you know, it wasn't even broadcast live. Everyone's always looking for something fun and cool to do on New Year's in LA and we were doing two shows there. So you've got people like Rod Stewart and people like that coming in to see us. And it was back in the day – you know what I'm saying? It was the beginnings of everything for me as far as being in a professional situation. Stepping it up to touring around the world in a band that's actually on the radio. So, it was a fun time for me. It was before everything got too business... We were definitely doing things that we shouldn't be doing as far as being healthy. But it was a learning time on all our parts. One thing I will say is – as hard as we played and the endless chase for women – the one thing we were really serious about was our music. And I remember John Waite telling me, "I don't care if you've got a song idea at 3 o'clock in the morning that you can't sleep on. Call me up. Come over and I'll put on the coffee and we'll dig in. And that's the way we approached our music. It was the most important thing to us.

Well speaking of Rod Stewart, I would love to know Rod Stewart's take on Jonathan (Waite) as a vocalist.
Well, I think he digs John, and I know John totally digs Rod. I think most of the Brits dig each other – especially the guys in that sort of a bluesy-edged realm. I think they all have a little something. There's a bunch of them. Paul Rogers, of course,

"Music is not a competition. I mean, it will never be a competition. Music is about whatever you want ...

and there's a few guys who showed up at our shows back in those days. They were defiantly checking out John, because John defiantly had his own take. His tonal quality was so frail, but he could sing so powerfully. He had a lot of emotion in the way he could turn on a phrase. We met a lot of people. I think a lot because of John, because John was a great frontman – and *is* a great frontman. He still is – and what a voice. When you hear John's voice for the first time it's pretty special.

Yeah, I like it. I wasn't planning on asking you about this, because I didn't know you played with Page and Coverdale, but do you have a Jimmy Page story or an impression of when you first met him or something?
I do, you know. I loved that. I wish it would have lasted longer. It was very short-lived. It lasted about five months. I had been on the road… When I was in Bad English we opened up for Whitesnake and I got a phone call one day. David Coverdale basically saying, "Listen, I'm doing a record with Jimmy Page. We don't know what we're gonnna do. The record company wants us to put a super group together, but we need to get working on this material. Would you be willing to come up? We're gonna be out of LA in a private area. Will you come up and work with us on this material?" A buddy of mine – Denni Carmassi, great drummer who was in Monstrose and also played with Heart for ten years and I had done all kinds of session work with the him – and the four of us just went in and started working on material. It was kinda like graduate school for me. Not only from Jimmy, but from David as well. I always liked working with British musicians, because they seem to have a little bit of what I think is a little bit of a hipper take on the approach to the beat being on the backside – even the way guitar parts are structured just seemed to be so cool. It wasn't all about flash and fast licks and "wiggly wiggly wiggly" kinda stuff. It was all about orchestration and arrangement and I learned so much from working with Jimmy and David – even though, at that point – I had actually done an awful lot of stuff. I had a pretty deep catalog of things that I had accomplished, but it was … just watching how effortlessly Jimmy would put together songs was very cool. We would jam all day long and Denni Carmassi and I would get up really early in the morning for a rock band. We would probably get there by 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning. He and I would be working on whatever we would be working on with Jimmy the day before and then we would meet up with Jimmy at 10 o'clock in the morning and we would work from 10 till probably 2 o'clock and then David would show up and David would start singing to whatever we had been working on and we'd do this every day. And it was very, very cool the way it all sort of formulated and came together.

But ... a funny story about Jimmy – I guess that was your question. Jimmy and I used to hang out at night. He liked to go to the clubs and when we started recording we moved the project up to Vancouver... Here is a funny story about David. David would kill me for this one. But we were hanging out in Tahoe and we walked into this place – it was a karaoke bar. And as we walked in Jimmy Page walks by... And with Jimmy … we couldn't even walk into a 7-11 in the middle of Nevada without 30 people showing up to get autographs from him. It was like, "How do they even know?" But we walked into this karaoke bar and Jimmy walks by and nobody says anything to him. David walks in and this girl jumps up and she goes, "I know you – you're David Copperfield!"

Ha ha.
Which, you know, he was David Copperfield for probably the next month. We couldn't let him live that down. It was a great moment. But again it was a good hang. We worked really hard on that stuff and had a great time doing it and, by the time we got up to Vancouver up at a little mountain to record, we were a pretty comfortable little unit. It was just really, really, really fun.

As a veteran, what is your perspective like now as you look at the music scene – both the business and the working musician touring lifestyle? What is your perspective?
There is hope. There is finally hope. There are great bands out there. There is great music happening again. It had to re-invent … kinda shake off … it was like, "This isn't working." It's kinda like a fly that is banging its wings against the window, when theres an open door a foot away. There's always been the music, but people never stopped creating it. But to get it out there and to figure out ways … and it had to be done on the street level and musicians had to be willing to do the work themselves. That's really always the way it's been. So finally, through the internet and through various ways, good music is starting to be heard again. It's not that there wasn't any good music, but finding its voice – finding a new path to get it out and to people. It took some time, man – it took decades.

We're finally there.
I think that I'm encouraged. I can turn on the radio and leave it there. I can actually stay on a station for more than three minutes. I mean, I haven't been able to do that in years. So that, to me, you know, thank God – finally! And it's been ... obviously, money still runs everything. And now that there was a little bit of success here and there... There's been some money funneled in a direction to where now there is a way for people to get their voice heard. It's still a little kooky for me. I don't get the process, because it wasn't the process I grew up on. I am just so encouraged now that there is a way for young bands to be heard and we are finally hearing good music again.

If you remember being a fan of bands as a kid, where you could name all the members of the band and you read about them in magazines... How does it feel to see bands change members?
Overall, it's not really a problem. It just depends on if I want to keep hearing that catalog or not. As long as everyone's very careful with their choices as they make these changes ... and it seems like they have. If I really stop and think about it and you gave me a half hour, I could probably come back with some that I think didn't work. But the way I've seen it happen … I was really used to, like ... for example, Fleetwood Mac. When they started off with Peter Greene – I mean, that's a completely different band. And then all of a sudden you've got Lindsay Buckingham and Stevie Nicks in there… I mean, that's way back. That's back in the '70s. But I was used to that. Bands changed a lot back in those days. Humble Pie changed. You know, there's the mainstays that I had, which were the Beatles... The Beatles were those four guys to me – even though they changed. Pete Bess was the original drummer, Stuart Sutcliffe was in the band. So, they changed before they were even known. There were changes being made in that band all along … and that's The Beatles. The Who was always four guys to me. I think a lot of the key players… I mean Yes – Yes never kept the same two members for two albums in a row. So, I don't understand when you… I think it's really … what messes people up is when it's the lead singer. And I understand that, because people … not everyones a musician. They don't understand the articulation and what's going on in the musicianship. But they do recognize the voice and they do recognize the melody and, when that voice changes, it bums them out. I get that – I totally get that. But we have been fortunate in Styx, I guess. Styx always had three lead singers, so, by changing one of them, you know… If that was your favorite guy, okay, *that* ruffles your feathers, but we've been fortunate that Lawrence Gowan – he has so many fans of his own and has really really won over most of the Styx fans. I think we've gained fans who really weren't into Styx before, but they hear Lawrence and go, "Oh my gosh, this guy's a rocker!" and they dig him. It's just to be expected. I had a guy ask me once: "Hey, you know, Dennis DeYoung is coming through town. Why should people go see you over him?" and I said " That's the most ridiculous question. If you want to go see Dennis, he is an amazing talent and he gave great gifts to the band Styx and when he was a rocker and he was contributing to what's going on with Styx and where the band has decided to stay and go back to – you know, you couldn't get that better than that, so defiantly go see Dennis. I mean, this is not a choice. Or see both or see one over the other, but everybody's decision is really personal. Music is not a competition. I mean, it will never be a competition. Music is about whatever you want. Every generation has their own music and within that music there are so many choices to be made and there is no wrong decision.

...Every generation has their own music and within that music there are so many choices to be made and there is no wrong decision."

What are your future plans for Styx at the moment?
I think we have kinda kicked off a fun year. I mean, we started off… Here we are at January and we were just on the *Rosie O' Donell* show two weeks ago, and we were on an NBC special, which may have not turned out… It sounded great on television. It was NBC, so it was well lit – it looked good, it sounded good. It was a show that we did with ice skaters, which I thought, 'Well, that's not very rock and roll.' It turned out to be great, so I love being wrong sometimes. But it was kinda cool, because I loved Peggy Fleming and she made ice skating hot for me. So Peggy Fleming was one of the hosts, then you've got all the olympian and world champion ice skaters. It was kinda a little bit of a reality show in that they weren't told what Styx song they were going to get. They only had a few hours to figure out a program to skate to. We condensed our songs down to three and a half minutes. I get so many emails over this by guys I thought would never watch

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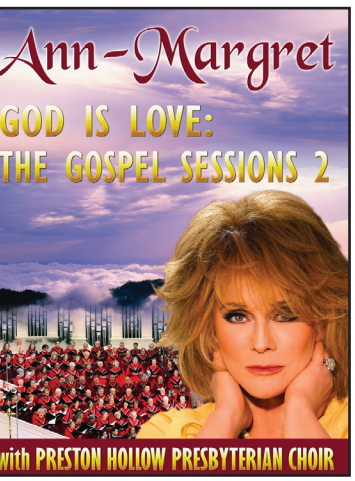


ANN MARGARET

AN INTERVIEW BY DOUG VAN PELT

Hollywood has long known that music and films are interwoven, but it's not every day that a successful actor will record an album – much less a gospel album. Ann Margaret has just made her second – *God is Love* – so we thought we'd talk to her and get her thoughts.

Well, what do you love about gospel music?
This is so – it's so personal. It's really so personal. Do you know Art Greenhall?

Art Greenhall. The name rings a bell, but I can't say I do.
This is my second gospel album with him. The first one he wrote a couple of songs. This we did in Preston Hollow, Presbyterian Church. I'm a Lutheran, but (laughs) in a Presbyterian church, in the sanctuary we recorded this one. 130 men or women in the chorus.

Wow.
Oh my gosh, yes. And we had a pipe organ with those huge pipes, probably five or six of them, and at one point a violinist and piano, and that was it. That's why I asked you about Art Greenhall. One night when I was doing *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, it was either Dallas or Houston, Art Greenhall, who I had never met, came backstage. And he wanted to do an album with me, a gospel album, and no one had ever said that to me. And I said, "But how did you know?" And he said, "I knew." Because it's so deep in my heart, so deep down. And that was the beginning of it. I was – I went to Sunday School at Trinity Lutheran Church in McHenry, IL, and I sang alto in the chorus. I was confirmed there. Then we moved to mid-Illinois and this was Trinity Lutheran Church in Skokie, IL.

Okay.
And I just – it's so much a part of me that nobody knows about except for my husband and obviously Art and my relatives.

Well, now more people can because of these two albums.
That's right, that's right.

Where were you and what do you remember about 9/11?
Oh my gosh. We were doing a *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, we had just finished in Indianapolis and we took a car to Kalamazoo, Michigan. We got there Monday night. Tuesday morning someone called our house in Los Angeles – a friend of ours – and said, "Look at the television." And this was 9:30 am. And we couldn't believe it, as everyone says. It was surreal – surreal. And that night we did not go on stage in Kalamazoo. But the next night we did and I realized that the people in the audience that night needed – needed to go out and the ones that, of course, did not come wanted to be with their family and friends to meditate or just try and work out what happened and why. And I asked our pianist of course at the end to do "God Bless America" and we all joined hands, everybody, all the cast came out and … we did that.

I bet that was a moment.
Well, I tell you, I'm an entertainer, since I was four years old and I want to make people happy, it's what I've always wanted. And I had a meeting with all of our cast and I said, "This is what we do." I mean, if we can for twenty minutes maybe, or an hour, or an hour and a half, maybe we can, I don't know, in some way help? And then it was unbelievable when we started doing "God Bless America." Everybody shot up in the audience and they put their hands over their hearts. That's America.

From the details of that story, it seems that you might be a natural born leader. Do you usually find yourself taking charge…?
Interestingly enough, I never thought of myself as that and yet, I have learned that.

Okay. You are a beautiful woman…
Why, thank you.

You're quite welcome. What are your thoughts on beauty? Comment on comparing yourself with other women and vice versa. And also comment on men gawking at you. It's a broad question, I know.
Okay, what's the first one again?

Your thoughts on beauty in general.
I think beauty is definitely inside.

And comparing yourself with other women and vice versa.
Oh, I never compare myself with other women.

Do you ever find other women comparing themselves to you?
Well, I don't know about it and I think it's just ridiculous. We're all going to the same place. (laughs) I don't know what it is, I just do whatever I want to do and I've been married to the same gentleman. If we make it to May 8th, we'll have 45 years.

Wow.
Oop! But that's if we make it. (laughs)

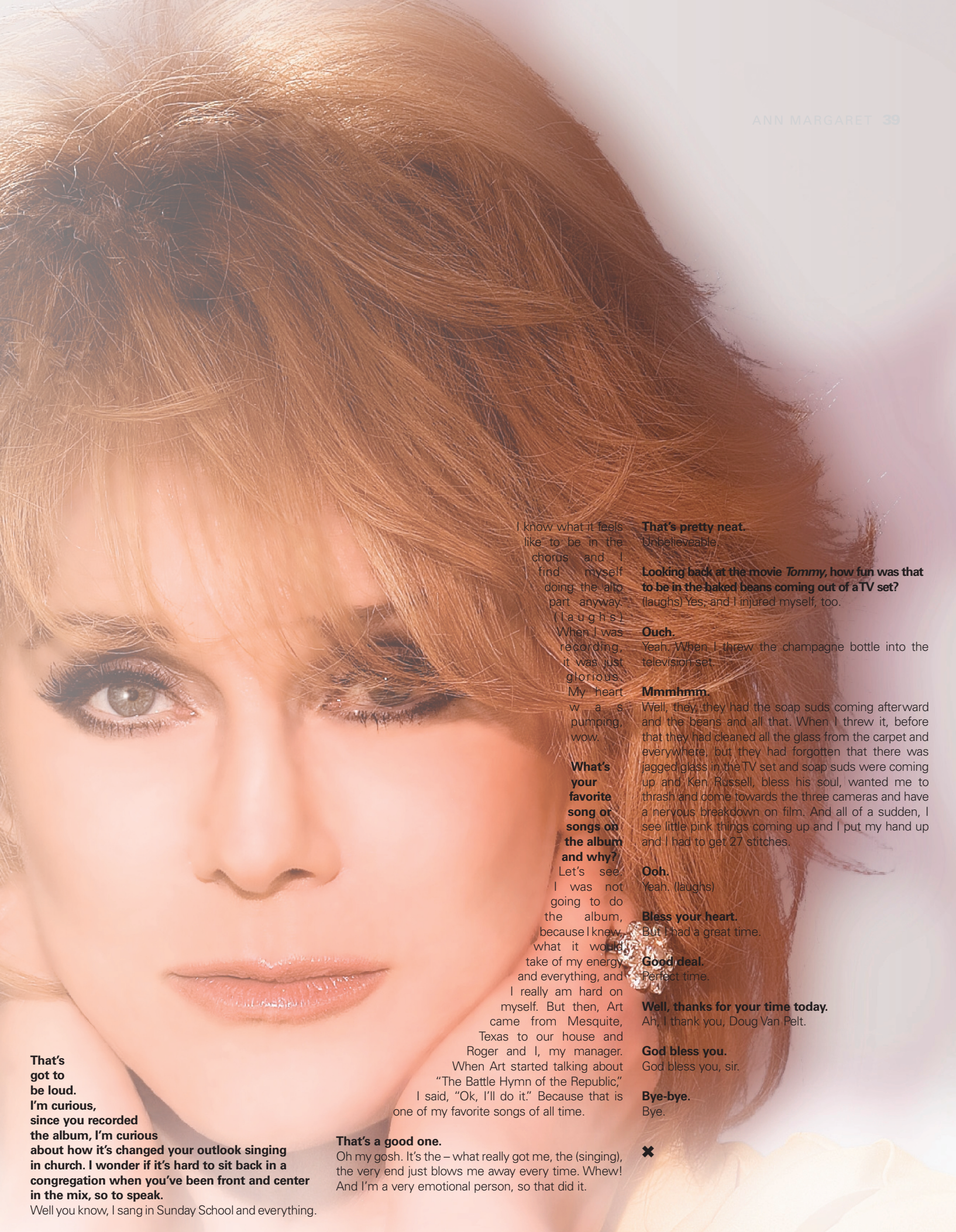
Lord willing and the creek don't rise.
That's right.

Now what about men gawking at you for your outward beauty?
You know, through the years, of course I find it flattering. I mean, I think any woman would be fibbing, lying, if she didn't say that, you know, that it is flattering.

And what do you think about Jesus?
I love him. I love him very much. I always have. I come from a family that felt the same – bless their souls.
Good answer. What do you think about His claims to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"
I have been taught to believe that since we came to this country.

How do you stay in shape and is it worth the price?
(laughs) I go up in weight and go down. Since I'm only 5'4" and ½, if I have an extra, let's say piece of cake or whatever, it shows. But I do work out Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. And then we have a group that walks every Saturday morning and I talked my husband into joining me on the days that we work out and my grumpy old man finally said yes. (laughs)

What are some similarities and differences in recording an album and making a movie?
Oh my gosh. It has always been hard for me to make an album because I'm so used to live performing in front of an audience. And there you are in a booth, but this one, this album that I did, I was right there with the chorus. And it was joyful and the organist – oh my gosh – the sound of the chorus, it was so inspiring. One never gets the chance to do that. It was in the sanctuary with really, really high ceilings. 130 voices, it was just thrilling.



That's got to be loud. I'm curious, since you recorded the album, I'm curious about how it's changed your outlook singing in church. I wonder if it's hard to sit back in a congregation when you've been front and center in the mix, so to speak.
Well you know, I sang in Sunday School and everything. I know what it feels like to be in the chorus and I find myself doing the alto part anyway. (laughs) When I was recording, it was just glorious. My heart was pumping, wow.

What's your favorite song or songs on the album and why?
Let's see. I was not going to do the album, because I knew what it would take of my energy and everything, and I really am hard on myself. But then, Art came from Mesquite, Texas to our house and Roger and I, my manager. When Art started talking about "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," I said, "Ok, I'll do it." Because that is one of my favorite songs of all time.

That's a good one.
Oh my gosh. It's the – what really got me, the (singing), the very end just blows me away every time. Whew! And I'm a very emotional person, so that did it.

That's pretty neat.
Unbelieveable.

Looking back at the movie *Tommy*, how fun was that to be in the baked beans coming out of a TV set?
(laughs) Yes, and I injured myself, too.

Ouch.
Yeah. When I threw the champagne bottle into the television set.

Mmmhmm.
Well, they, they had the soap suds coming afterward and the beans and all that. When I threw it, before that they had cleaned all the glass from the carpet and everywhere, but they had forgotten that there was jagged glass in the TV set and soap suds were coming up and Ken Russell, bless his soul, wanted me to thrash and come towards the three cameras and have a nervous breakdown on film. And all of a sudden, I see little pink things coming up and I put my hand up and I had to get 27 stitches.

Ooh.
Yeah. (laughs)

Bless your heart.
But I had a great time.

Good deal.
Perfect time.

Well, thanks for your time today.
Ah, I thank you, Doug Van Pelt.

God bless you.
God bless you, sir.

Bye-bye.
Bye.

✖

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FOR TODAY

IMMORTAL

For Today has lost a step. Immortal, the Iowa-bred quintet's fourth full-length record, gives listeners nothing new to the metal scene. It's got almost every cliche you have heard from a record in this genre: Soapbox talking over screams at the end of "My Confession," not one but TWO instrumental tracks to prove to everyone they're actually musicians who like music other than metal (complete with strings!), war, fighting, calls-to-arms metaphors. The structure of every song is made of three ingredients: two-step, chorus, breakdown.

Most depressing is the quality of the lyrics. It's hard to get past songs with lyrics from popular quotes you've probably seen on Hallmark cards like, "Every man dies. Not every man truly lives." There is the typical lyrical rebellion: "We will not conform," the "Let your voice be heard. We are the revolution." And the ever classic: "Hell can't stop us now." Powerhouse cameos from Jake Luhrs of August Burns Red and Sonny Sandoval from P.O.D. can't even save those songs. The record starts out brash with the major track "Fearless," but it comes to represent exactly what the rest of the album is: palatable. We all know palatable works for public-consumption, but most of the public *isn't* fearless. They like routine and they don't like change. And that's what *Immortal* brings. [RAZOR & TIE] DAVID STAGG

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

DEMON HUNTER

TRUE DEFIANCE

Demon Hunter has released six studio albums, a live album, and a DVD set in 10 years. Quite a feat for a project that began with some uncertainty. *True Defiance* is chock full of the aggression and melody the band has become known for. Vocalist/songwriter Ryan Clark is innovative as usual, and Patrick Judge's guitar leads are plentiful. Longtime bassist Jonathan Dunn and drummer Tim "Yogi" Watts weave the rhythm section intricately. Guitarist Jeremiah Scott (The Showdown, Living Sacrifice producer) has been added to the group, and the band fires on all cylinders. From the thrash of opener "Crucifix" to the electronic build of "This I Know," DH continues to do what they do best. The tempo change near the end of "God Forsaken" is truly awesome, and "Means To An End" marks their first released instrumental. One of the highlights of each record, the ballads "Tomorrow Never Comes" and "Dead Flowers" sear with emotion. The deluxe edition includes two bonus tracks ("What Is Left" and the orchestral "I Am A Stone"), large format booklet and lyric cards, cross pendant, and DVD with acoustic performances and a track-by-track rundown by Clark. *True Defiance* finds Demon Hunter at the top of their game with no signs of slowing down. ~~[SOLID STATE] CHAD OLSON~~

SWITCHFOOT

Vice Re-Verses EP

One of your favorite rock bands feels compelled, for whatever reason, to re-release a few songs from their latest album as remixes. Electronic remixes. And this band you like doesn't use synths all that much on their regular records. Part of what you like about this band is their their ability to stretch themselves some. Even so, you wonder why. If Switchfoot are among your faves, but you didn't take the time out this past April to set up camp at a local retailer for Record Store Day and buy your boys' contribution to the celebration, the *Vice Re-Verses* EP, let the wondering begin. If you happen to also love you some Owl City, you should be pleased with how O/C's Adam Young makes his bit in the proceedings sound remarkably like his own band, but with Jon Foreman singing. Elsewhere, if you've long pondered what Foreman would sound like over '90s-styled big beat, skittering low-key drum&bass and a swooshing, lonesome wind behind him, look no further. Sometimes the sonic recastings beneath Foreman's trenchant, sometimes agitated lyrics offer a fresh perspective on the observations he communicates. At other times, you'll be as likely to think, "This is pretty fun, but when are they coming out with something new?" Thus the gamble of a rock act putting out a set of remixes: keeping you based somewhere between alert and amused, giving collectors and remix fiends (they exist) something to give you royalties with room to breathe between "real" projects. Intriguing, this, if questionably essential for S-foot and certain dance music diehards. ~~[ATLANTIC] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

MEWITHOUTYOU

TEN STORIES

mewithoutYou is back with their new album, *Ten Stories*. This is very different from previous albums. Aaron's voice is much more mellow and melodic compared to older albums. While the music still has its classic mwY moments, there are still change ups to keep the listener interested. There are more upbeat and happy songs than usual and a lot more melodic singing. Paramore vocalist, Haley Williams, returns to the new album to bring in an ambient background layered over Aaron's voice. The music compliments the lyrical genius of Weiss very well throughout the entire album. Don't go into this album expecting your typical mwY album, because you will be disappointed with that attitude. ~~[PINE STREET] NICK COTRUFO~~

TIM KWANT

RAQAD

Perhaps it's not too difficult to make praise & worship music out of the U.S, cCm industry's template for it. It's another concept altogether to craft songs fit for congregational and personal devotional use that purposefully eschew Nash Vegas formula while also harkening back to the exalted language of older hymnody and using fairly experimental backing to do so. Scottish electronic musician Tim Kwant achieves this goal on *Raqad*. Skittering synthesizers, more influenced by what Sufjan Stevens has been doing with the instruments lately and bands such as Ratatat than current club and pop manifestation, undergird lyrics that find a joyful medium between reverence and ebullience. Kwant sings sometimes in the first person regarding his relationship with the Almighty, but not in the casually familiar manner to Him that characterizes so much Stateside p&w. His brogue-ish tenor communicates a humility of self and awe at the God Who has made him His. The whole enterprise might be fragile and twee as a Belle and Sebastian b-side were it not for the sturdiness of Kwant's melodies and his poetic way with biblical truth. The titular instrumental exceeding 11 minutes and three acoustic songs – one of which is possessed of the potential to become to the current generation what Noel Paul Stookey's "The Wedding Song" was to many '70s matrimonies – display an easily appreciated versatility and foretells of more goodness to come. ~~[ANAZAO] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

THE HOTSHOT FREIGHT TRAIN

GET LOW

An album of simple melodies and strong impact, *Get Low* is sure to raise a wave of acclaim for The Hotshot Freight Train. An East Tennessee-born band, THSFT proudly bares its roots with an Americana/Narrative brand of rock that's soulfully decked with strings, keys, and a dash of sax. The moving ode, "Boys from Tennessee," flaunts an infectious E Street Band sound while belting out the credo "boys from Tennessee finish what they start." The song "Mountain to Nowhere" is a beautiful lamentation set to music – a song of brokenness and praise. "Highway Lines" is a get up and dance jam, decked with keys and tenor sax. It's the song rocker Dave Edmunds never wrote. With masterfully layered sounds, *Get Low* is a rock and roll storybook written by a band that exudes rock, rhythm, and soul. Welcome back, Hotshot. ~~[FUTURE DESTINATION] CHARLIE STEFFENS~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
For Today *Immortal*	04	02
Demon Hunter *True Defiance*	04	03*
Switchfoot *Vice Re-Verses* EP		03*
mewithoutYou *Ten Stories*	04	04
Tim Kwant *Raqad*	04	04*
The Hotshot Freight Train *Get Low*	03	04
Chris Lizotte *Power in Weakness*	03*	03
The Great Commission *Firework* EP	03	03*
Driver Friendly *Bury a Dream*	03*	04
The Choir *The Loudest Sound Ever Heard*	04	
GX Project *Bite Stick*	04	
John Schlitt *The Greater Cause*	04	
To Speak of Wolves *Find Your Worth, Come Home*	03*	

CHRIS LIZOTTE

POWER IN WEAKNESS

Chris Lizotte opens his wonderful new worshipful album, *Power In Weakness*, with the rhythmically methodical "Shadow Of Your Love." It finds the soulful singer taking the time to show just how thankful he is for God's love. This album's very title expresses spiritual dependency, as it reveals how God oftentimes is at His most powerful when we're at our weakest. There is a loose gospel feel to these songs, with the aural ambience of a little country church where every man can skillfully play his instrument and all the women sing like gospel choir standouts. The instrumentation is primarily acoustic, driven by guitar and occasional touches of keyboard. Lizotte is pictured like a tough mountain man on the CD's cover. Once you get past this literally tough exterior, however, it's still that same gentle Lizotte soul. The album's title track finds Lizotte giving a welcoming invitation to the world's weary, with an offer nearly impossible to refuse. ~~[METRO ONE] DAN MACINTOSH~~

THE GREAT COMMISSION

FIREWORK EP

The heavy chug of The Great Commission has given way to an almost-100% acoustic EP, named for its only non-acoustic song, a cover of the Katy Perry hit that infected everyone in early 2011. The trick here is that the aforementioned titular track is the only new song on the EP and it's not even their own – the first five tracks come from their 2011 album *Heavy Worship*. The whole concept here seems a little odd and unattractive as a music fan. (Are they just trying to make money? Were they just *that* happy with their cover they had to find a reason to record and release it?) However, as far as the music goes, the songs they brought on to this EP are very anthemic, complete with multiple vocalists, background chants, and the group feel of being at a show if the power went out and it had to go on. The cover is mediocre (in the age of YouTube, there isn't a song you couldn't look up a clever cover of), but the songwriting and melody of the original is fantastic and still carries the song. But if you've already bought *Heavy Worship*, don't bother with this. Go listen to that and, when it's over, just Google "firework cover." ~~[ANGR] DAVID STAGG~~

DRIVER FRIENDLY

BURY A DREAM

Three Years after a successful debut album Driver Friendly realized moving in separate directions it was time for a change, later finding clarity in a cabin secluded from civilization, penned the album, *Bury A Dream*; in the simple, serene, pure place that is nature amplifies a feeling of enlightenment and life experience. The album showcases songs about life, letting go and growing in a melodic yet upbeat fashion: songs like "Young Creek" exemplify "reaching the mountain top" related to realizing a dream. Songs like "Lost Boys" that illustrate giving up or letting go of a dream to pursue another "Bury a dream, watch it grow," conceding that although dreams can die, that can be necessary for them to grow into something brand new and beautiful. Every song is emotionally charged delivering songs about life, death and letting go while resonating the importance of living. ~~[PAPER THIN MEDIA] NICK LITRENTA~~

THE CHOIR

THE LOUDEST SOUND EVER HEARD

"You are so melodious," Derry Daugherty sings in the song of the same name. This is the sweet comfort sound of The Choir. When this guys swoons over his perfectly tuned guitar (and that wonderful, atmospheric tone), it could almost make a grown man weep or put a baby to sleep. If The Choir had a middle name, Melancholy would be it. And then there's the tasteful and quirky drumming of Steve Hindalong, the classy saxaphone of Dan Michaels and the incredibly infectious bass playing of Tim Chandler. With this lineup, these guys would have to try hard to suck. Fortunately, they turn in one of their best collection of tunes here. Highlights are hard to pick, because it's such a good listen from beginning to end, but the duet between Daugherty and Sixpence None the Richer's Leigh Nash must be mentioned. An unusual but winning combination for this band. Perhaps we'll hear more of this type of collaboration in the future now. ~~[GALAXY 21] DOUG VAN PELT~~

GX PROJECT

BITE STICK

It doesn't matter what you call this band. AC/DC will work. X-Sinner will work. But just so ya know, it's GX Project, signifying Glenn Thomas (the "G") and Rex Scott (the "X"). Some people say that the legendary AC/DC has released the same album ten times (plus) over. That's bunk. The proof is in anyone's playlist. Check out the quantity of plays *Back in Black* or *Highway to Hell* gets and then look for *Flick of the Switch*, *For Those About To Rock We Salute You* or *The Razors Edge* numbers. They'll pale in comparison, because the sound is one thing, but good songs are another. Whereas *Black Ice* marked a respectable return for the Aussie rockers, *Bite Stick* is a worthy release that should be able to withstand the test of time. ~~[IMAGE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

JOHN SCHLITT

THE GREATER CAUSE

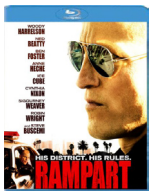
I'm shocked ... but in a good way. Old man Schlitt has apparently decided not to rest on his laurels, pedigree or even his trademark voice. Nope, he didn't "phone this one in." Dude brought it. And I don't just mean his voice wails and vibrates or anything like that. His songs get off the floor and dance around. This is not only good news for old Petra fans, but all those folks that supported Schlitt's Kickstarter campaign will soon realize that their investment was well-deserved and has produced many fine returns. A cursory reading of the credits reveals that producer Dan Needham had a heavy hand in the songwriting. Major props go out to this guy, because the songs not only rock, but they're good matches for the voice. And it doesn't hurt to have hot Nashville cats like Chris Rodriguez playing the precise rhythms of the fast-tempo rocker, "Hope That Saves the World," for example, the multiple tasty guitar leads or sexy riffs like the opening of "Love Won't Leave Me Alone." The song "Faith and Freedom" is a 4th of July anthem if I ever heard one and "The Gift" is a tear-jerker love song to a wife. ~~[4K] DOUG VAN PELT~~

TO SPEAK OF WOLVES

FIND YOUR WORTH, COME HOME

Some subjects are bound to start a fight when brought up. Some bands are the same way. Their songs and performance mix with such a volatility artistically, that it's a riot waiting to happen on stage and in the speakers. Like the song "Vertigo" implies, the band just wants to get a little violent upside your head. The single "Je Suis Fini" is all growling and climbing guitar scales with guttural pleading and a melodic chorus, then repeats. Love it. Ground-breaking, amazing new sound? Not a one. Fabulous metal for a raging fun listen? Eleven times yes. ~~[SOLID STATE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

LIFEstyle film



RAMPART
This is a dark movie. It's hard to find any redeeming value to it. It's well acted, well produced. The story line informs the viewer as needed. A lot of cameo's included. The general thought that one is left with is conflicted. On the one hand, the movie seems bent on venting the abuses of certain segments (who was the cop in the Rodney King mess?) of the LAPD to which conservative people will see as a bias toward all Police, on the other it addresses the real issue of rogue cops who do whatever they feel is best, regardless of the outcome. But cops are not always right. We continue to hear of more abuses each day. The moral rule that might be derived from this film, and this isn't really profound, would be that no matter how much you lie and steal and push sin into the future, one day you have to pay. Everyone will get what's coming, one way or the other.
[Millennium] *Mitch Roberts*
[Cuss: 91 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 80]

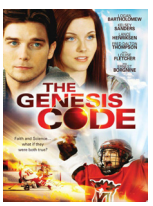
THE OTHER F WORD
I've heard it said that God gives us children to mature us. But what if the very career that you support your family with has immaturity as part of the job description? *The Other F Word* takes a raw look at a variety of "professional" punk rockers and how being a loving father has challenged them to be more responsible. Amidst normal daily activities, funny moments and some tragic memories, this documentary shows the struggle of changing and sacrificing for the good of our offspring. You don't have to be a punk or a touring performer to emotionally connect with this movie. I'm neither of those things, but I am a dad. I literally laughed and cried. [Oscilloscope Earth] *John Nissen*
[Cuss: 20 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 60]

PLAYBACK
The list might be longer, but add this to the one that includes *Pump Up the Volume* (as in disappointing movies w/Christian Slater). I wanted it to be good, especially when I read the words "supernatural thriller" in the movie synopsis. While right in the pile of mildly entertaining teen slasher films, I'm sorry to say that this one ranks high in the suckage category. [Magnet] *DV*
[Cuss: 100+ | Gore: 3 | Sex: 7 | Spiritual Conversations: 10]

THE GREY
Here's a slow-moving moving pitting man against man and man against nature. An airplane carrying a bunch of remote blue collar workers goes down in the Alaskan wilderness. A pack of wolves start stalking them and taking them out one by one. A couple of interesting "prayers" are uttered throughout the film: One serves as a makeshift memorial service - "God, bless these men. They were ... some were our friends and we could be lying here with them. Thank You for sparing us and protecting us. And, oh, keep that up if You can." The other was more of a taunt - "Do something! You phony (bleep)! Do it now and I'll believe in You to the day I die. I'm calling on You! (bleep) it. I'll do it myself." Liam Neeson is a bad Bama-Jama, for sure, and he makes up for a lot of slow-moving plot non-action here. Not enough to make it an overwhelming repeat watch, though. Sorry, dude. [Universal] *DV*
[Cuss: 100+ | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

THE VOW
Turns out the book might be better than the movie (and the stories are quite different, as the screenwriters used a basic premise and crafted two entirely different characters for this couple), but the movie is darn inspiring in the sense of love in the face of the latter part of "for better or for worse." One of the creative liberties the movie makers took adds a lot of tension, which was the wife's parents, who try to leverage Paige (Rachel McAdams) back into their estranged lives. Sappy? Yes, but you knew that going into this DVD viewing, didn't you? Kudos to our culture for responding to this story, though, as it majors on against-the-grain covenant commitment. [Sony] *DV*
[Cuss: 5 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 90]

HARDFLIP
Make a movie about skateboarding and you've got my attention. This one follows the story of Caleb (played by our hero from the gripping teenage film, *To Save A Life,* Randy Wayne), a young skater whose ill mother (Rosanna Arquette) and absent father leave him reaching for the only hope he has – becoming a sponsored skater. After finding a stack of old love letters, he sets out to find the father he never knew and inadvertently begins a journey he never could have expected. This story explores what happens when we let go of our anger and pain and forgive those who have hurt us most. [SkipStone]



THE GENESIS CODE
The Genesis Code is an independent faith-based film which highlights the intersection of science and faith as well as other issues facing Christians today. The film stars Logan Bartholomew and Kelsey Sanders as college students whose chance meeting leads to a burgeoning relationship and a journey of spiritual discovery. Exploring three major issues facing Christians today, The Genesis Code tackles the alleged conflict between religious and scientific explanations for the beginning of the universe. The film also explores the often ignored story of discrimination against Christians on college campuses, while dealing with end-of-life issues portrayed through Logan Bartholomew's character as he fights to prolong the life of his comatose mother when his grandparents attempt to remove her from life support against his wishes and despite the possibility of recovery. [eOne]

DARK SHADOWS
Without this '60s TV show, we wouldn't have teen Vampire flicks and shows (before you say, "Hooray! That's a good thing," let me state how creepy and cool this pre-goth music scene this show was). Barnabas Collins (Jonathan Frid) stars in *The Best of Barnabas* disc with nine creepisodes and *The Fan Favorites* disc delves into popular ones that outline the tales of occult darkness, time travel, werewolves, exorcisms and introductions from cast members. The original. [MPI]

KEY to Ratings = number of scenes w/cussing, gratuitous sex, violence & how easy it would be to start a "spiritual conversation" after viewing it with someone.

LIFEstyle gadgets

RUBR WATCHES
Beth Smolen started this company after a seagull swooped up both her sandwich and watch from her beach towel in Miami in April 2011. In looking for a replacement knock-around watch, she discovered a huge gap in the timepiece market – the trendy, colorful rubber watches that she loved were all much too expensive. She filled this void and so RUBR watch was born. A unisex, time piece that's light and comes in multiple colors that doesn't break the bank. [rubrwatchnation.com] *DV* [Price: $25]

ELEMENT CASE VAPOR PRO | SKATE LEGENDS
Element Case makes a life/road-worthy iPhone case out of titanium alloys, which is strong enough to take a drop. They've tapped some of the legendary skate companies from the '80s for some backplate graphics to deliver this case of high style and function. Kinda heavy, but the metal edges give you max confidence with very little bulk. Vapor Pro kit comes with zipper case, "speed wrench" mini screwdriver to join the two corner pieces, and skate legends bio card.
[elementcase.com] *DV* [Price: $149]

THE HM MAGAZINE PODCAST IS ALWAYS FREE

PODCAST.HMMAG.COM

RECORD BOWLS
You've probably seen these and might've wondered where to get them. Wear Your Music sells these and other "rock recycled" gifts, including guitar string bracelets.
[wearyourmusic.org] *DV*

MUSICBUNK APP
Marketed as "Your friends' music in your hands." Nice. It's a new social media Android and iPhone app that links your listening habits with your friends via playlists, tunes, chat, texts, etc., by integrating with your Facebook and Twitter accounts. The happening part of all this is the convenience of doing it with your smartphone. And it's free. If everyone starts doing it, this could be fun.
[musicbunk.net] *DV*

LIFEstyle gear

BOWERS & WILKINS P3 HEADPHONES
P3 joins Bowers & Wilkins' growing range of high-performance mobile hi-fi headphones that already includes the P5 on-ear headphones and C5 in-ear headphones. With close to five decades' accumulated acoustic and design excellence behind it, P3 represents a new high in affordable mobile headphone performance. [bowers-wilkins.com]

FENDER PAWN SHOP JAGUARILLO
The Pawn Shop Jaguarillo guitar hot-rods traditional Jaguar design through the roof with a scorching HSS configuration in which all three pickups – two standard Stratocaster® single-coils and an Atomic humbucking bridge pickup – are angled for enhanced bass and treble response. [fender.com]

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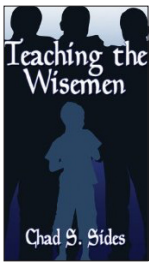
FENDER PAWN SHOP REVERSE JAGUAR BASS
If you wanna turn heads, Fender introduced the Reverse Jaguar Bass, which features (ironically) a "reverse" body and "reverse" headstocks, new pickguard shape, two Reverse Jaguar humbucking pickups and a streamlined control layout of a single three-way pickup toggle switch and two knobs (volume and tone). [fender.com]

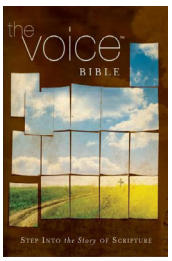
GET'M GET'M GUITAR STRAPS
Get'm Get'm Wear is celebrating 15 years in the music industry with the continuous production of all American made musical accessories. From Guitar straps to Drum stick bags, Get'm Get'm Wear products are designed with quality, taste and style standing out from the rest (like this stylin' Daisy Brown strap). [getmgetm.com]

LIFEstyle

books & graphic novels

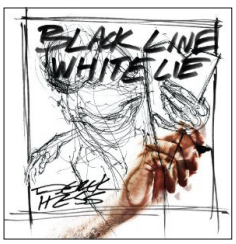


TEACHING THE WISEMEN | CHAD SIDES
Chad is a part of a group called Fans for Christ, which does outreach at conventions, celebrating a diverse collection of interests (anime, fantasy, horror films). This is basically a chap book of his poems (which are fun), but his meanderings and collected thoughts get introspective and compelling. [CSSpace.com] *DV*



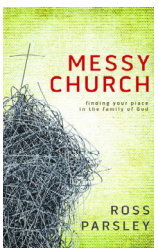
THE VOICE BIBLE
This is an actual translation of the Bible, which puts notes about the books to offer context and breaks down the words into modern-day English. While space does not allow a full-blown critical review of this translation, a cursory glimpse shows goodness. Take one of my favs (Col. 3:16): "Let the word of the Anointed One richly inhabit your lives." I like that. Makes me wanna read more, ya know? [Thomas Nelson] *DV*

BLACK LINE WHITE LIE | DEREK HESS
Like anything he does, Derek Hess has total control and almost an amplified ability to express himself with his line-style art. This collection of his works in black & white shows off several themes he's worked in over the years. It ends with a (color) gallery of tattoo photos of folks that've taken an appreciation of his art to a deeper level. [Strhess Press] *DV*



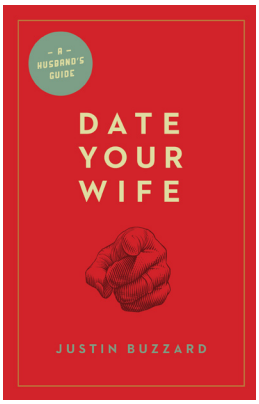
DATE YOUR WIFE | JUSTIN BUZZARD
This book starts off with a familiar refrain to husbands: "It's all your fault." It's mixed with some common sense and conviction and, before you know it, the cynical resistence inside will disappear and be replaced by conviction, motivation and prayerfulness. The premise is so true: how many of us guys think "Game Over" once we walk down the aisle (and stop "dating" our wives)? Wrong thinking. Needs correction. This book gets practical and biblical. [Crossway] *DV*

ASHAMED NO MORE | T.C. RYAN
There are some things we just don't talk about. Things like sex, particularly when our sexuality is a matter of personal struggle. Things like the vulnerabilities of our pastors, who must maintain a façade not merely of respectability but of moral and psychological superiority. We don't talk about things that make us feel insecure, that make us feel unsettled. But the nature of spiritual growth, even the story of Christian faith, is a matter of being unsettled from the comfortable compromises we've made and set on a course together toward wholeness and mutually supportive community. Pastor T. C. Ryan takes us on an unsettling journey through his lifelong struggle with sexual addiction, one that predated and pervaded his pastoral ministry – one which for far too long he faced in secrecy and isolation, separated from the brothers and sisters in Christ who were called to bear one another's burdens. *Ashamed No More* doesn't cast blame or argue for looser moral standards. It does, however, call us to the unsettling ministry that a God who is love calls us to – the unsettling grace that is the audacious gospel of Christ. [InterVarsity Press]



MESSY CHURCH | ROSS PARSLEY
When God created the church, He didn't build a corporation. He created a family. We are not called to be consumers who ask what the church can offer us. Instead, we are called to be a family, loving deeply, fighting fairly and bringing hope to a new generation. A true family is where we are known, loved, accepted and, ultimately, where our deepest needs are met. Our culture is dying for the kind of community that only the church can provide – if we are living as the family God intended – protecting one another, extending grace and loving unconditionally. In *Messy Church*, Pastor Ross Parsley shares his compelling vision for a better way of life. It's called church – and it's a place where no one gets left behind. [David C. Cook]

MOONBLOOD | ANNE ELISABETH STENGL
The author's follow-up to her debut novel, *Heartless*. A romantic fantasy adventure that follows Rose Red, banished and lost in the hidden realm of Arpiar, held captive by her evil goblin father, King Vahe. RIYL Donita K. Paul and Bryan Davis. [Bethany House] *DV*



DATE YOUR WIFE ... REALLY

Justin Buzzard

From as far back as I can remember I've thought about marriage. My daydreams and prayers have always been full of thoughts about "her."

Beginning at the age of four or five, my mom tucked me in at night with prayers that made mention of my future wife. We prayed for her protection and well-being. We didn't know who this little girl was or where she lived, but we asked God to arrange all the details for us to someday meet, marry, and build a family of our own.

Twenty years after these prayers started, I met "her," the woman of my dreams, at a party in Palo Alto. Seven months later I proposed. Three months later we were married. Last week Taylor, my bride of seven years, gave birth to our third son, giving us three boys under age four. We've been busy.

My story is rare. Most men don't grow up with a mom who tucked them in at night breathing out sentences and prayers about the grand adventure of being a husband. But the rest of my story is not rare. Every man's marriage begins just like mine, with a date and a dream.

A Date

Your marriage didn't start on your wedding day. Husband, your marriage started on your first date. During that first date with your bride, you began laying the foundation for the day you would say, "I do," you began laying the foundation your marriage stands upon today.

How long have you been married? How long ago was that first date? Think back to that day. Replay the memories in your mind. Most men don't realize that the concept of dating their wife is something they've already built into the foundation of their marriage.

What was your first date with your wife like?
What's your story?

My assumption is that all of our first date stories have one thing in common: we acted like men. We pursued our wives-to-be. We made the move. We initiated. We took a risk. We took the lead.

Just like you had to take the reigns of your music career. You've had to pursue your music with a passion that should only be rivaled by your passion for your wife.

Husbands, this is important for us to remember. I'm calling you to do one thing. The action I want you to take is summed up in just three words: date your wife. This three-word action isn't something foreign, intimidating, or new – I'm asking us to do something we've already done, something we've already built into the foundation of our marriages: date our wives.

It doesn't matter if you've been married for a short time or married for years. It doesn't matter if you are on the road full-time, if she comes on tour with you, or if some combination of the two.

A Dream

Can you remember when you first began thinking about marriage? Most women can. Most men can't.

I've met women who had the flavor of their wedding cake picked out when they were in pre-school. My wife's not one of them. A child of divorce, she thought little of marriage – she was scared of marriage. She planned to pursue a career and put marriage off until her late thirties. That plan didn't work. Taylor was twenty-three on our wedding day.

I've met men who think a lot about women, but seem to never think about "the woman," about marriage. That's not my story. I grew up looking at girls with one question in the front of my mind, "Could I marry her?" One girl passed the test.

Whether your story is more like my wife's or more like mine, the point is that you didn't approach your first date or your wedding day with a blank slate. You had thought about marriage before. Whether highly conscious or unconscious of it, you had ideas, feelings, and beliefs about marriage. You had a dream.

A dream is a collection of ideas, feelings, and beliefs about a particular topic. A dream is what drives a man.

As a boy grows up, he gradually forms a dream for his future marriage. Some men are aware of this. Some men are not. Some men form a healthy dream for marriage. Some men do not. But every man approaches his first date and his wedding day driven by a dream.

What was your dream?

Some men dream about marrying a woman who will satisfy their every desire, preference, and need.

Some men form an anti-dream, they simply dream of a marriage that is not like their parents' marriage (or lack of marriage). Early on, they decide they want a wife who is not like mom. They decide they want to be a man who is not like dad.

Some men dream of a marriage that is "conflict free," or "not a lot of work."

Some men dream of a marriage that honors God and that is a lot of fun.

The dream that drove you to that first date, that drove you to the altar, is likely still driving your marriage today. That dream set the course, and is probably still setting the course, of your marriage. What was, what is, that dream?

If we are going to be men who date our wives, we must uncover the dream that drives us.

VOL. 7 – TAKE **HOLD OF THE SOUND** | MATT FRANCIS

Summer meant festivals. For youth group kids, that meant Christian music festivals.

You can't get much more homespun Christian than mid-western Michigan, yet one place on the map was sure to beat us: Oshkosh, Wisconsin. We found it and then converged on it for a four-day festival. It was called Lifest, and believe it or not, they actually played music alongside pro-life campaigning.

Lifest ended up being a big stop for any Christian music artist. All the big names in adult contemporary as well as alternative were present; it really was a well-balanced family festival. We would get in a day early, Wednesday night when camping started, and leave after the grand finale, usually Michael W. Smith doing a stadium-bleacher-sized altar call on Sunday afternoon.

Lifest, more than anything else, was CD shopping. Thousands and thousands of dusty albums of any and every obscure, niche recording from obscure, niche artists within the small sub-section of music where (barely-apparent) Christian faith met the alternative indie underground. This was Mecca. This was my own chocolate factory and Willy Wonka was played by Jesus in a jean jacket. These CD's must have been scoured over for years. They would be touted from Christian festival to Christian festival, year after year, collecting the dust of dry summers kicked up by conservative middle-American feet. In between bands, this is where I would be found, combing through the piles of cracked plastic cases, finding long sought-after gems and embarking on new paths of musical discovery when a band name or album art caught my interest (and at the risk of a mere 2.99 per find). Anything started looking passable by day four of your third year looking through the same stacks, so every random artist got their day.

Driver Eight had a lead singer that looked like my cousin with his nose flattened in. I bought the album more on recognition than appreciation (at the time). It seemed mechanical; I had heard two songs off of their single release from a Tooth and Nail music video compilation DVD that I played almost every day after school. I didn't particularly like their songs, but I knew them and occasionally played their videos in my many marathons with that disk. When I saw their album *Watermelon* (which featured a pumpkin on the cover) I bought it as a prerequisite to further CD shopping, rather than a vested interest in the music. Driver Eight didn't fit the mold of pop-punk. Driver Eight was my first indie rock album.

It took me a spin to realize the two songs I had heard prior to purchase were the two weakest tracks on the album. This no longer holds true. It was considerably darker music than I was accustomed to; haunting guitar tones and sparse lyricism over traditional rock beats instead of the hyper punk I had been limiting myself to. They were the REM of Christian music, a safe comparison since Driver Eight derived their moniker from an REM song. A couple more spins and I really got hopeful; here was promise. Some of the songs were actually upbeat and melodic. One track may still hold the title for bounciest song to never delve fully into bubble-gum (*Waiting For Godot*, a criticism on existentialism). Repeated listens and the album was further cemented within my CD collection (and among my Lifest finds) as top-tier. This was one of my first albums to really show depth, with a presence that unraveled over repeated forays into its layered sonic landscape, rather than the typical on-the-surface songwriting and delivery of the more summery punk bands.

As I fell in love with *Watermelon*, the question was begged: who are these people? Any of these people, really. Who are they? The faceless musicians releasing under-the-radar gems among – or against – the total pantheon of music. These people toiled and cared for sounds that would largely go unheard, yet still saw some validation; signed to labels, albeit labels like Bettie Rocket and Flying Tart Records, with records pressed and released, if not eventually confined to the dustbin of a niche festival in the heart of dairy country. It's an interesting process I would play through in my head. Somewhere, three, five, even ten years prior, some guys got together and poured their lives and collective passions into a recording, probably releasing a demo tape. Somewhere, somehow, this tape made it into the hands of the head of a small, specialty Christian label with distribution mostly limited to small, specialty Christian book stores (imagine that). These artists could share the faintest ruminations of Christian ethic, occasionally (and rumored) only a single member had to profess any theological grounding that could be largely absent from the recordings, and this was enough to satisfy the heads that (un?)successfully marketed the material to the Christian underground. Were the bands happy just to ink those deals or satisfied with any attention, even youth group attention? Did they think about the limited market? Did they want to meet that limited market, and was this a step on a viable career path? I remember the initial mystique around a record deal, something that's largely faded (even though I've never drank from that well). Did the bands equate a record deal with success, no matter how limited the labels reach in the grand spectrum of listening ears? Either way, the albums were released. The bands may have toured, maybe regionally. Most seemed to have disbanded by the time they reached my hand, rescued from a weathered cardboard box and yellowed with dust. *Watermelon*. I know this band. I've seen their videos; their songs are okay. Maybe I'll hold onto it and continue looking. That's what I'll do, I'll buy this album if I find another album that interests me. I'll buy them together. Yeah, I need to have this album in my collection. For 2.99, I can afford that. I can still get a Switchfoot t-shirt.

But something else happened besides studying the economics of Christian underground product flow. It hit my ears, and the original emotions hit me. They transferred over the time, distance and thick July, thousand-body festival heat, to impact me and ultimately change me.

So who were these faceless musicians that had something to say, if for only a short time, on a stage or in a studio? Were they still making music? A short-order cook somewhere or did they go back to school for accounting? I knew all about MxPx, the KISS of Christian punk; I was a proud member of their fanclub back then. I probably knew too much about Mike, Tom and Yuri, because of the useless print newsletter they sent out to fans (pre-email age). What about the unspoken heroes? Well, I just happened to be a fledgling film maker and this was the very question I posed in a short-lived documentary on Matt McCartie – the man behind Driver Eight, the singer, guitarist and drummer credited with all the songs who looked like my cousin with his nose flattened. I had the liner notes of *Watermelon* to go of off, and armed with a mini-DV camera, I pressed the issue. The main scene I remember filming was my call to the operator, asking for an M. McCartie I had tracked down to Fullerton, California. Internet searches with random "Aha!" moments do not make for engaging drama, and the documentary came to an abrupt end when I actually found him, now working as an editor for VH1, happily married and a father. Needless to say, I didn't win the Pulitzer. It was an exciting find in my life, and it's possible he enjoyed the appreciate for a project long abandoned, even if our relationship consisted in little more than him putting up with asking him questions over instant messenger. At one point he agreed to do an on-camera sit down and mail me the tape, but this was never filmed. He did share with me his new solo project, *Theft*, and I was blown away – more so by the fact I felt a part of something exclusive than the quality, although the tracks were pretty good.

What I realize, looking back, is I was desperately searching for my own validation. I was living and breathing this music, this record, and it couldn't possibly be that the creator simply sent it adrift. No, he had to still be living and breathing it, too. I had to rationalize this person, this songwriter, and maintain the music's relevancy through that of its author. I couldn't deal with the fact that this piece of art had been abandoned, or that the work was left unrecognized. Didn't everyone feel as passionate about music as I did? There

continued on page 51

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

Concerning "Jeus is My Girlfriend" Songs: Observations on the Imbalances of Today's Worship (Part the Fourth)

We've seen in this series that contemporary worship music has become dominated by songs modeled on romantic, experiential, subjective musical expressions. We've further seen that, though such songs are a legitimate stream of Biblical worship expression, they have been historical and Biblical worship models (such as the Psalms or the Book of Revelation) held in balance with objective, doctrinal song content.

We then began to investigate how and why such an imbalance has occurred in arriving at such an experiential overemphasis. We began by seeing that the deep alienation between God and mankind engendered by the Fall leads men to see the world dualistically, as split between the "pure" spiritual realm and the flawed and imperfect physical world, a view which is a result of the simultaneous and inescapable knowledge that men have rebelled against their Holy Creator while they attempt to suppress that inescapable knowledge (Romans 1: 18-32).

The resultant spiritual schizophrenia of Fallen mankind leads men frequently to see the human condition as, at best, a necessary evil from which men need to escape. This conviction is held despite the fact that men know that God has created the cosmos as a physical/spiritual intertwined unity (though they try to suppress that knowledge; cf. Romans 1:18-20), and is a conviction frequently held as well by Christians (who should know better) despite the fact that Christ Jesus died and rose to reconcile the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5: 17-19, etc.).

The world is not sundered between the physical and the spiritual, but is rather infected by sin, for which Jesus atoned by His Death. Nonetheless, the dualism which informs all pagan thought has dogged the Church's thought and actions despite the Revealed Truth in Scripture that Christ has reconciled the world to Himself, and the dualistic pagan view has brought about, ultimately, the perceived split between the subjective and objective poles of faith and worship which informs the imbalance in worship music today.

The pagan dualistic perspective was institutionalized philosophically in the Ancient Classical world in the school of thought known as Platonism (and its reactionary offshoot, Aristotelianism), which taught a radical disconnect between the pure spiritual realm and the polluted, changeable physical realm, and that a species of salvation was to be obtained by escaping the physical world into the spiritual realm, first by experiencing that escape while still in the body, and then escaping the physical forever after death.

This philosophy became the dominant model for understanding the world in the pagan Roman Empire, versions of which formed the backdrop for the instruction of every educated person of the period. When Christianity began to spread throughout the Empire (and for some centuries after), many of the educated converts (a number of whom ended up as theologians, bishops, priests and abbots) carried with them into the Church a Platonic view of Reality, and began to read Scripture through that dualistic grid.

Because of their bias, many of these educated converts understood key words in the Bible dualistically, words like "flesh" (Greek sarx, which was used in the Epistles to describe the old nature or "old man," as Paul sometimes described it, in places like Romans 8: 8-9; 9:8; 2 Corinthians 10:3; Galatians 3:3; 5:24, etc.), which the dualistic converts took to mean "the physical body," and identify the Fallen nature with the body and senses primarily. They also read "world" (Greek kosmos) in Scripture (which in the New Testament is frequently used to denote "the world-system," that part of the cosmos, both physical and spiritual, which was under the dominion of Satan, as Paul did in 1 Corinthians 2:12; 11:32; Galatians 1:4; 4:3; 6:14, etc., and as John did in 1 John 2: 15-17; 4:4; etc.) to mean the physical world, which was seen as the metaphysical locus of evil.

These Platonic converts understood these words in terms of a metaphysical separation and antithesis between the physical and spiritual (which is the opposite of the thrust of both Creation and Christ's Incarnation), and brought into the theology and perspective of the Church pagan dualistic concepts, which reinforced the distrust of the body and the Created order already so prevalent in the Classical world. This strand of thought in the Church helped justify and encourage monastic ideas of retreat from the physical world in pursuit of "spiritual" truth and fullness, which resulted in distrust of the sensual, the body, and of marriage as arenas of real spirituality.

Though Incarnational theology over the centuries chipped away at much of the effect of dualism in the Church and society, the Platonic dualism of the ancient pagans lived on in the theology of the monastics, who more and more came to dominate the leadership and infrastructure of the Church, and thus a Christianized dualism continued to coexist and conflict with Incarnational and full Biblical theology in the very bosom of the Body of Christ. This situation set the stage for the next step in the process, which resulted in the prominence of the subjective over the objective in modern worship as we will, God willing, see in the next article. [*kempercrabb.net*]

Guest editorial by Chad Johnson

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
–Romans 8:1

Romans 8 is quite possibly one of the richest of all chapters in Scripture, especially when it comes to the multiple promises and empowering truths it provides to each and every Jesus-follower. I'm blown away by how thick this statement (and chapter) is. Sometimes Scripture comes alive one layer at a time for me, how sweet is the Word! As I continue to keep an open eye to specific passages God may have me memorize/focus on, I'm struck by the fact that I could likely spend a week or two just committing to heart & mind the depth of Romans 8.

There is therefore now no condemnation. Jesus introduced, by the blood He willingly shed, the final end to condemnation. When a judge pronounces his verdict against an evil-doer, that man stands condemned – whether he agrees with the verdict or not. We were all born with a natural bend towards evil-doing. Jesus was sent to reclaim the hearts of evil men. Through one perfect Man, God damned condemnation for every sinner honest enough to surrender. Many in the world love the idea that all roads lead to God. This is true, every road does lead to God. The question is whether the road will keep you WITH God – meeting God face to face is a default, remaining in His presence is Jesus. The world may assume that because it does not believe in God it might whimsically wish Him away out of the picture. One of our roles, as believers in Jesus, is lovingly and brutally honestly helping the world understand that the goodness of God is only found in the shed blood of His Son.

...for those who are in Christ Jesus. The truth of freedom, the truth that sets men free is only found in the guiltless arms of Christ Jesus. Once our lives are surrendered to this King, all previous judgements that stood between us and a just God are recognized as paid in full. It just doesn't get any better. This side of eternity, we don't truly understand what a precious price was paid. It's OK, one day we will. And we won't just get it and lose it, we'll get it and keep it for all eternity. What a promise! What a hope! I'm a sinful man who ought to be daily condemned for his disobedient heart. But, here, with Jesus standing in front of me – shouldering the imperfect from God who deserves perfection, the all-consuming fire of God does not see sinner destined for judgement – but sinner rescued toward saint. Apart from Jesus, there is no life. If you don't know Jesus, cry out for His help now! He will come quickly to your side.

Prayer: Thank you, Abba Father, for Your willingness to provide Jesus as the high price that my sins required. Thank You for damning condemnation because I am in Christ Jesus. Please continue forming my life into Yours. Help the world around me see clearly the promise that Jesus has redeemed me and makes all things new. I am new. Thank You.

Reunion Tour | cont'd

was no giving it the ol' college try; you worked until you bled and then most likely died of starvation from underwhelming the record-buying demographic, but you never, ever stopped.

Jack White made a comment in an article a few years ago (October 2002, *SPIN*), aimed at obscure record collectors, stating: "Usually when someone brings up something obscure, I assume it's not very good, because – if it was – I would have heard it already" (ironically, the man releases a lot of his own music, and through his label, with the entire point of making it rare and exclusive [and I realize he was insinuating more towards the practice of collecting rather than listening, because he says so]). I must disagree with Jack, although I respect him very much; many a great record has been recorded, and through a series of circumstances, they often stay great but unheard. But it doesn't matter if 10,000 ears hear it or it sells cars or some indie director puts it on his soundtrack; either way, the songs are great and they do have life, if only for those that hear them. Occasionally, we'll even check out who made the unheard albums that stay constant through our collections, if only to say "I remember you."

PICK OF THE LITTER

☆ Toddo
Mixing indie, rock, pop, spirituals and even a few Chicago-style horns, Toddo crafts a wonderful melodic vibe not too unlike Derek Webb. Infectious, compelling. I guess the artist feels the same way, because he taught himself how to record and engineer an entire album. "I simply have to get this music out there to the general public," he states. He's thinking long-term, too, giving away this album in exchange for an email and a zip code.
facebook.com/toddosongs

Broken Flesh
Solid death metal with bold lyrics, like: "Let Your presence reign. Pour Your Spirit into me, as I bow before Your throne. Let Your greatness be magnified as I bow before Your throne."
facebook.com/brokenflesh

Those Lavender Whales
Aaron Graves' indie-folk-pop project Those Lavender Whales spent three years crafting Tomahawk of Praise (as well as dealing with a flood in Nashville, marrying Jessica Bornick, who has replaced Aaron on the drumset, and moving back to Columbia, SC). The result is a happy, multi-textured collection of sonic joy. Fans of Anathallo will appreciate the tendency to lay back and let the instruments sing like voices, but will probably like the uptempo speed.
forkandspoonrecords.net

Mark Wagner
Super clean and good pop rock worship with a nice lounge-y vibe with a soulful, Tyrone Wells-like delivery at times.
markwagnermusic.com

Michael Paul Scally
This is Americana hippie rock done right, with rugged, raw and realistic performances that demand attention. The lyrics hop off the page, too: "America's in trouble, no one seems to care. It's all inbred corruption, you see it everywhere." Scally states that his new album "shows the darker side of America. It expresses not only the volatility of the past decade, but also many peoples' fear of the future."
salvationrock.com

Before the Foundation
A five-piece progressive metal band from Rochester, NY. Interestingly, the band started out as an instrumental outfit before adding Adrian Blackwell's vocals. Managed by LoudMouth Mgmt, the band is working towards its debut EP, due for release this summer. Lots of powerful chugging and racing riffs.
facebook.com/beforethefoundation

☆ Honour Crest
An intense post-hardcore/electronica mix that'll thrill fans of TDWP, Like Moths to Flames. Passionate vocals and tight, fast rhythms that turn on a dime and punch your ears strategically with well-placed singing and screaming/howling. Beautiful. This Virginia Beach/Chesapeake, VA five-piece is working on an album (*Metrics*) for summer release.
facebook.com/honourcrest

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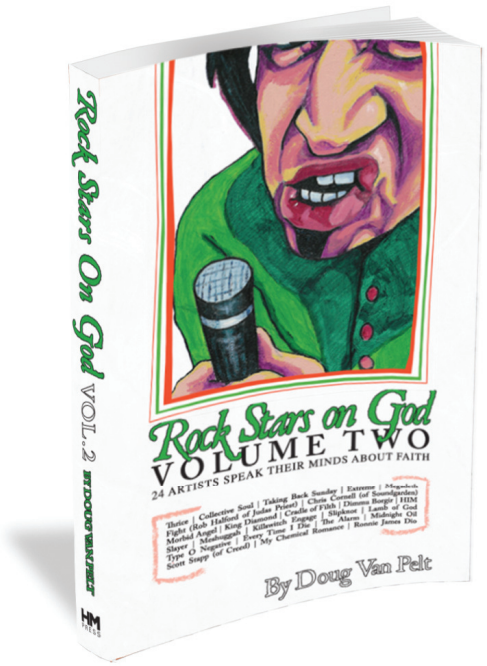

Volume 2 of the popular *Rock Stars on God* series. This collection of 25 interviews from the pages of HM Magazine features:

Thrice, Collective Soul, Taking Back Sunday, Extreme, Megadeth, Fight (Rob Halford, Judas Priest), Chris Cornell (Soundgarden), Morbid Angel, King Diamond, Cradle of Filth, Dimmu Borgir, HIM, Slayer, Meshuggah, Killswitch Engage, Slipknot, Lamb of God, Type O Negative, Every Time I Die, The Alarm, Midnight Oil, Scott Stapp (Creed), My Chemical Romance, Ronnie James Dio.

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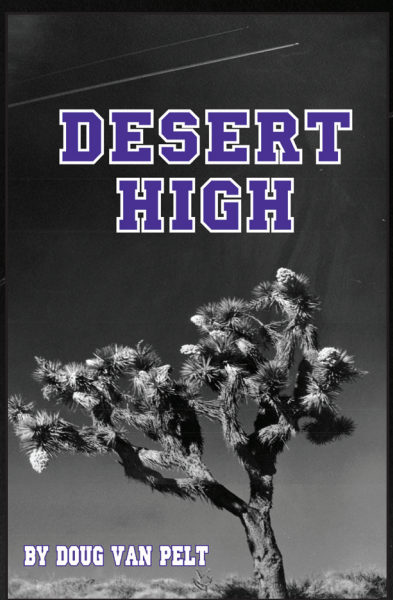

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL,
flight testing & TIME TRAVEL?
read it all in the book *Desert High*
HM Editor Doug Van Pelt's first novel

DesertHighBook.com

X-Sinner/GX Project | cont'd

the best. X-Sinner has never been a sermon band or preachy and my GX Project stuff is even more mainstream in its approach that way.

What are some major themes your songs are saying and what are the standout lyrics on this new album for you?
There are fun treatments of material on *Bite Stick* and there are more serious subject matter treatments. I try to capture my own frustrations I know others feel about the state of the world in which we live and I have fun with other subject matter. Greg has a master's degree in theology, which causes all of us to think of Christianity and life in a different light than, say, a band without a theologian in it (laughs). Our thinking and understanding no longer allows us to subscribe to what most of typical Western protestantism subscribes to like we used to. It's much different for us now compared to when we first started. When we look around we see most of it as selfish, shallow, opinionated and pharisaical. I write about that some as well. The first single is "Tricky Little Devil," as you know, and I love the lyrics in that song. It lets the listener derive their own meanings from it. One could take it at face value lyrically or you can have fun with it and take it a couple different ways. I try to write like that more now. I want it to be entertaining first and foremost.

What do you think are key factors for "old bands" to focus on to be successful? On the flip side, what are some mistakes that "old bands" should avoid when "coming back," per se?
It really depends on what definition of "success" each band holds. For us, it is to just put out good material and to be able to play it well live. Be ourselves and do what we do – not trying to be something we are not. We don't assume our stuff will change people's lives. We've never written our stuff with that intent. You may think about something, because we put it in a light you're not used to seeing something in, but we are in the music entertainment business. If something we play lifts you up or helps you some way or makes you feel good – well, that's what music does. No different than what any good mainstream artist out there is doing. That popular song "So You Had A Bad Day" – not sure if that's the exact title – is a great example. It has a comfort quality about it knowing we all have bad days. Depeche Mode had that hit "Dream On" that really was moving and filled with truth. I love honest writing like that. I don't want to try to sound "current" or be trend-driven. I think that would be a mistake. We never really tried to "come back." We never looked at it like that anyway.

How have you managed to balance surviving financially and singing in a rock and roll band? I'm curious to know about the struggles and how things have perhaps changed over the years (good times, bad times, etc.).
Typically musicians in general sacrifice good careers and jobs to be able to play music more. Fortunately, Greg and Mike didn't suffer those circumstance like I did. Greg already had a great career as an electrical engineer and Mike had his own business and still does. I came from the band Zion and really had no career except music. All I had done prior to Zion was play in hard rock bands and held down typical crap day jobs, so once metal died here in the U.S. and grunge took over, X-Sinner really wasn't doing anything and so I was able to have some time to be able to salvage out a decent career in the warehousing industry as a manager in a relatively short period of time. I've since gone to work for one of the major home-improvement warehouse companies – first as an inventory purchaser and now as more of a hands-on inventory integrity maintainer. I have enough vacation time allowances to go play in Europe or other places if I need to, so it is a pretty good balance. Rob had decided to go to school to be a software writer at about the time the band was tracking the Angry Einsteins album, so he found his career later on in life like I did. He works for the MGM group of hotel casinos in Vegas now, writing software for their business needs. I and Rob have had tough times in the old days with little or no money, but we made it through with the help of our wives and Greg and Mike. Every label except Dorn Reppert's Image label and Retroactive Records either took advantage financially of the band or completely ripped the band off. It continues to this day. One well-known CCM online retailer never paid us for the several hundred copies of *World Covered In Blood* they ordered and sold. We would love to show up at their booth at Cornerstone and repo an equivalent of their inventory and get some justice. Who knows, maybe we will (laughs). I'd love to see the look on the guy's face. And they call themselves "Christians," which is even worse. That's the most disgusting thing about it.

What advice would you give other musicians who still have something to offer?
Just be true to yourself and what you know to be true. Being genuine is the best policy. Do it with a teachable heart and not like you have all the answers – because you don't.

What else would you like to talk about?
The GX Project baby! (laughs) Some were confused and thought it was an X-Sinner project of some sorts, but it isn't. It wasn't like the Angry Einsteins project, where we put it out saying "X-Sinner presents the Angry Einsteins." This is a total separate entity of Glenn Thomas and I. It is definitely in the same genre musically as X-Sinner, because Glenn is a big X-Sinner fan and I can't change who I am musically, but we are our own creation, so to speak. If X-Sinner decides to retire I guess it will be GX for a while for me, and I have no problems with that.

✖

Photos: Mike Bolli

Styx | cont'd

an ice skating show. They were like, "Dude, that rocked!" It was kinda cool, because you've got these guys doing these corkscrew spins and all this stuff to the music and it actually worked. But then we've got the DVD coming out of *The Grand Illusion* and *Pieces of Eight*. It's got a double collection of the *Regeneration Volumes One and Two,* which were CDs that we kinda started to put together, because of the games *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero.* When they needed the original recordings of the masters, some of those masters aren't playable. Some of them are hard to find, so we started rerecording the catalog for that, but then we started having fun. Tommy had written a song and said, "Let's put that on the first volume." We did a song called "Difference in the World," which is just the coolest song. It's kind of an extension of "Fooling Yourself," actually. And that got some airplay in the UK and a couple of places in the South. It was just a fun song to throw on the backside of already prerelease material – or formerly released material. Then we did "Coming of Age" and "High Enough" from the Damn Yankees days. We threw that on *Regeneration,* too – just to have something fun and different. And so those two are being released out at the end of the month as one package – a double CD package. What else do we have coming out? We're on VH1 right now with *Behind the Music*. They interviewed me in London last June and Lawrence and has some other new footage of Tommy and J.Y. They have some great stuff on Chuck. That was just January, so I'm encouraged that we have a lot of stuff going on. Looks like it's going to be a fun year. Our economy has improved a bit. It's been really tough on people the last couple of years. I think that's going to help us as well. We haven't really suffered ourselves through this, but we've felt for others who have. I think as we tour around the country we are starting to see a lot more smiles from people coming out. And, you know, just remembering that no matter what's going on, you've gotta have a healthy good time and I think music is probably one of the best ways to do that.

That's awesome. What do you think about Jesus Christ?
Wow. What do I think of Jesus Christ? Um… They used to call me "the little preacher" when I was a little kid. I used to try and convert little kids in the neighborhood. I remember one instance. I had these kids that lived down the street... I won't mention their names, in case they're ever around. I haven't seen them since we were little kids, but I'll tell you a little story. I knew the family were atheist and these two kids were my age. I'm probably five or six years old and I tried to explain to them, "You need to believe in Jesus Christ. I mean, all good things happen through Jesus Christ." And the older brother couldn't quite wrap his mind around it, so he split and the younger brother hung around. And I started talking to him. He told me some things that were bunk and I told him what he needed to pray. He needed to pray about it and he wanted to know what that meant, so I told him whatever it was in my five or six-year-old vernacular at the time. He came back to me the next day. He said, "You know, I don't know about this Jesus Christ stuff. I don't think it works." And I said, "Why not?" And he said, "I prayed last night that God would kill my brother for beating up on me. When I woke up in the morning, he was still there." So my preaching days are pretty much over. I didn't know where to go from there. But you know, I think no matter what your religion is or your faith is, it's important to have it. I think I've learned a lot as far as tolerance goes. I don't preach anymore. I'm not the guy that goes out there and tries to share the Word. But I do try to live my life in a way that I lead by example and teach by example. And that's important to me. I think that's probably – that's key with me. I know a lot of people who claim to be … you know, they go to church every Sunday and they do a lot of things, but I'm not seeing it. I think it's important that we are all on this planet for a short period of time and there are a lot of lessons here, and if you just charge forward and don't really stop and learn the lessons and give back as you go, you're coming back.

Speaking of tolerance, I've got one more spiritual question. What do you think of about the claims of Jesus to be ,"The Way, The Truth, and The Life. No one comes to the Father but by me?"
Um … that's a tough one. That's a tough one and this is the problem I have with it: I realize that someone who was born in another culture, in another city, in another country, in another continent may never even hear the name Jesus Christ, so, he is the creation by the same Creator Who created me. Why should I have the advantage? Why should I have that knowledge that he doesn't and benefit from it? I think certain things … I've never been one to take anything verbatim and I've been lost in thought, and I'm sure everyone does, but I've been lost in thought. I've contemplated every side and every angle and agonized, and I've had struggles with my faith, I've struggled in life with many things, but that's one that will always confuse me. I don't understand that. How that could be?

What do you think has been the biggest breakthrough in musical gear in the last 5 or 10 years and why?
Wow, that's a transition! Let's see … um, you know, I guess I would have to say digital recording, because I was a producer on tape and we couldn't pitch correct. We couldn't, you know, copy and paste. Everything was done – every chorus was sung. I mean there were guys slaving off choruses and then dropping them in, but we used to sing all the choruses. Every chorus was a different vocal. The most we would do is we might comp on tape what you would save to record. A guy would play three guitar solos and then you would go back and comp lines out of all three of those solos and drop them in. And vocal takes were also done that way on big, huge records. Most major singers never sang from top to bottom on any song. They would sing a song three, four, five times and a comp(ilation) was done of the best performances of all of those five and then you got the master out of it. I think it's the best way to go, because the guy isn't breaking up his phrasing. He's just singing throughout the whole song and you keep the vibe alive that way. But sometimes you're left to your own devices, because in digital recording you can correct and correct and correct. You wonder why it sounds so flat? It's perfect, but why does it sound so flat? Why is it just laying there? I think that, by recording the way we used to – on tape – a lot of the older school guys have hung on to some of that. Do the full performance. Don't just punch in all the time, because punching in, man – that's where you lose a lot. Yeah, you may have sung it perfectly in pitch that time, but with everything around it nothing really creates the live setting that you hear on a lot of old recordings. And if you go way back even to, like, the early jazz era, you can hear squeaking piano benches. There's something cool about all of that. So, at the same time we've been given all of these amazing gifts of modern technology, we still have to rely on recording techniques and great production and someone who gets the overall picture to make it right. The Beatles had George Martin and everyone's been told they were kind of a mess when they first went in the studio. He wasn't even sure about them, but in four short years they did amazing things. So, there are a lot of lessons to be learned, I think, in recording with new technology as it comes along. But I guess I would have to stick with that as being really – still, at this point – one of the major factors in modern recording would be just hard disk recording or computerized recordings.

When you look back at your earlier career, what's an example of something you complained about then that you are kind of embarrassed about making such a fuss over it?
(laughs) I have to go back to recording a lot of performances that I nitpicked over. It didn't make any difference. You know, you get something to the point where you start microscoping things so far down that you get caught up in the minuta and the big picture is … I used to struggle and fight over takes. You know? "Nah, the first take was better than the second take," or, "No no no, that lyric sucks! It was better when you were singing this and that." Certain things really … as long as it flows, it's got a certain vibe, you know? It becomes moon and june and spoon and whichever one you choose it really works and it's not a cure for cancer, you're not saving the world. I think it should be that important to you, but I've learned to let go of certain stuff that I was going to absolutely, you know, I was going to quit the band over certain stuff. (laughs) You know, if it's that serious to you and, you know ... to me anymore... I want to have that same intensity and I want to believe in the music that much, but I realize you've got to choose your battles. Some things are more important than others.

"I have musician friends who go, 'How could you sit and listen to the blues … what are you getting out of it? It's the same chords over and over.

"I think that may be the beauty of it – is having the ability to use very little and speak so much with it."

Read any good books or seen any good movies lately?
Man, I'm about to see a bunch of good movies, because I'm a member of Screen Actors Guild and I've been sent some great films that I'm going to watch this week before voting. But we've been so busy… I just got home. I had my first three weeks off in a year over the holidays and, man, I had workers painting and doing things that I've just kinda haven't had a chance to get around to all year long and just general boring home-life stuff. I haven't been able to read. Let's see ... what have I read lately? I've started probably five books. I don't know if I've finished any of them. I like to read things like Keith Richards' book, and I read Ron Wood's book, I read Eric Clapton's book. I've been kinda getting into the… I never really read books by any rock guys before, but for some reason this past year I started getting into that – especially guys like Clapton, who were very influential on me. I really dug the Stones, because I always thought the Stones were the sloppiest… They appeared to be the sloppiest band known to man and you wondered, you know, can they really even play that well? But, man, they're incredible. If you think about their songs and how good those songs feel … if guys would pay more attention to that than all the millions of notes that a lot of people play, they would advance so much in their own growth. There's something to be learned, because, if you don't have that, you may never have it. You might be able to play faster than any guy on the block and you might be able to play any scale that you can dream up on the spot – whatever it is – and play it forwards, backwards, inside and out, but knowing when to leave notes out and what a groove is and how it's created, what makes it good, what makes it flat. Note choice by Eric Clapton when he was playing in Cream... Oh my gosh … that's a master class. Not the Eric Clapton we've known for the last 20 … some-odd years, but if you go back to the Cream days and the notes he's hitting. He was a big Albert King fan and a fan of others in the blues era. He took that to a master class back then. There's a lot of stuff that could be learned by things that appear to be so simple … and now I've forgotten your question...

It was good movies or good books.
Oh yeah…haha.

Well, last question. Please list a few favorite new albums by any artist.
Oh man … let me think. You know I really dig The Black Keys' new song. I can see why it went to number one. I think it's been number one for, like, the last seven weeks or something like that. I really can't even give you the name of the song – that's how long I stay with something, but every time I hear it I dig it. Avenged Sevenfold is a band that I think is very interesting. There are a lot of mainstay things that are probably not as interesting to probably younger listeners, but whenever I hear anything by, say, Jack Black – he's kinda like a super hero of mine. And of anything that has been out more recently. There are a couple of things I'm forgetting right now. I'm not a huge Arcade Fire fan, but I kinda dig… I know it's easy to make fun of … living here people make fun of Arcade Fire, but when they first came out you've gotta admit that it caught your ear. You know you had to kinda check that out. It's easier for me to actually in my mind *not* like things and I think that's kind of a drag, but I'm generally not that guy and I hate critics, because they make … it's easier to slam something and look like you're cooler than them than to say, "Wow, give somebody their credit for doing something interesting," and that's what I mean about Arcade Fire. Rather than slam them... You know, there is something about them when I first heard them that intrigued me. I love Wilco. There's just certain bands that do things different man. I don't care what the genre is. I was at one point in my life where everything had to rock, if it wasn't balls out Led Zeppelin, you know, off the chain, then I wasn't into it. But I have always dug the blues and I think that's what saves me. I have musicians who go, "How could you sit and listen to the blues … what are you getting out of it? It's the same chords over and over." I think that may be the beauty of it – is having the ability to use very little and speak so much with it.

Yeah, good point. Well Ricky... Man, I've taken you way over the time that I thought that we would be spending... I appreciate it and I really enjoyed the things you had to say.
Well thanks, man. It was interesting.

✖

"You might be able to play faster than any guy on the block and you might be able to play any scale that you can dream up on the spot – whatever it is – and play it forwards, backwards, inside and out, but knowing when to leave notes out and what a groove is and how it's created, what makes it good, what makes it flat … Eric Clapton took that to a master class back then."

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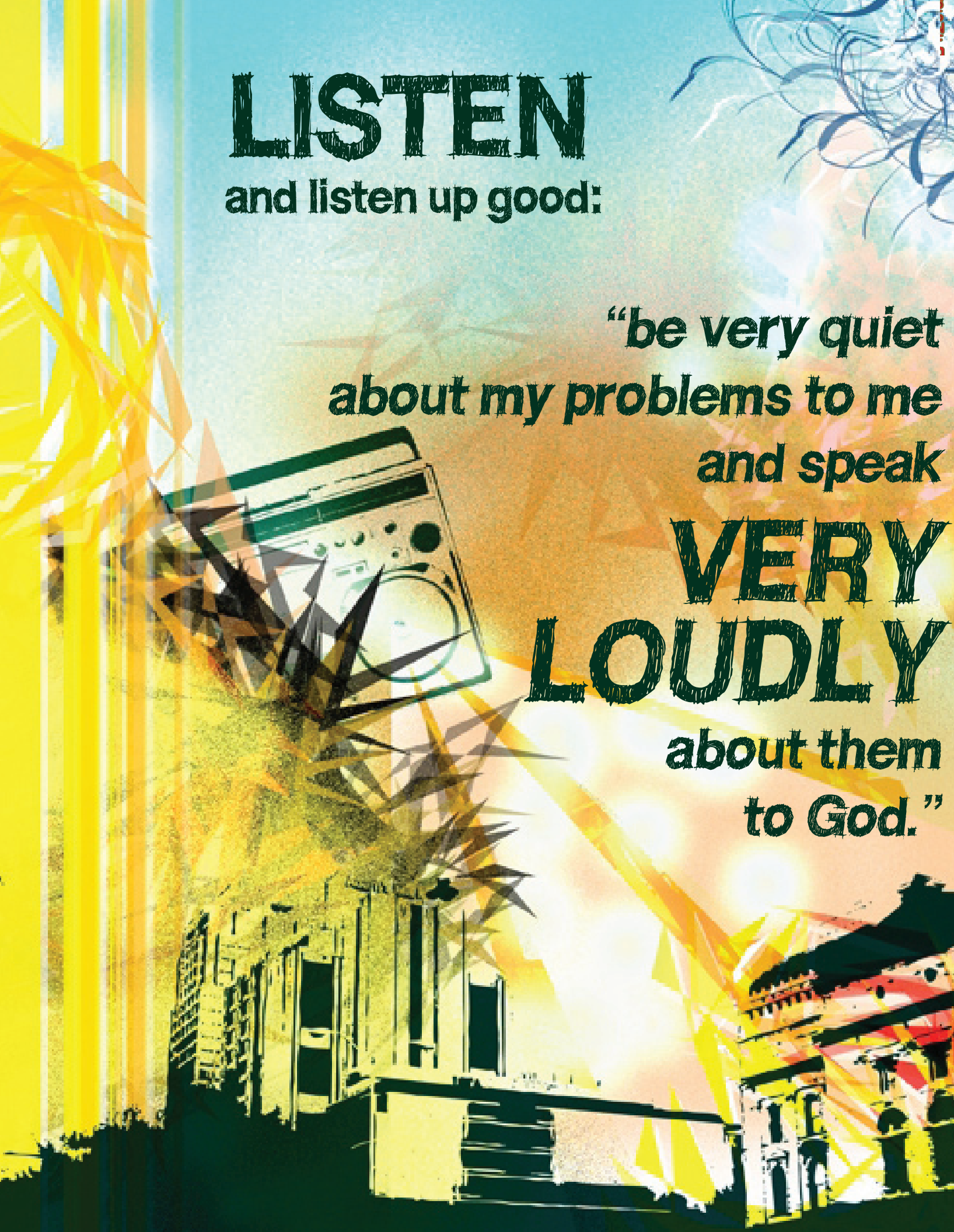
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